VITA

NAME OF AUTHOR: John Frederick Scheck

PLACE OF BIRTH: Milwaukee, Wisconsin

DATE OF BIRTH: September 7, 1930

UNDERGRADUATE AND GRADUATE SCHOOLS ATTENDED:

Concordia Junior College, Milwaukee, Wisconsin
Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri
Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri
Portland State College, Portland, Oregon
University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon

DEGREES AWARDED:

Bachelor of Arts, 1952, Concordia Seminary
Master of Arts, 1961, University of Oregon

AREAS OF SPECIAL INTEREST:

American Religious and Social History
History of the West
Renaissance and Reformation

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

Instructor, Assistant and Associate Professor, Concordia College, Portland, Oregon, 1955-1965

Teaching Assistant, Department of History, University of Oregon, 1965-1966

VITA--Continued

AWARDS AND HONORS:

National Defense Education Act Fellowship, 1966-1969

Colonial Dames of America Resident in Oregon Scholarship, 1968

TRANSPLANTING A TRADITION: THOMAS LAMB ELIOT AND THE UNITARIAN CONSCIENCE IN THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST, 1865-1905

by

JOHN FREDERICK SCHECK

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Department of History
and the Graduate School of the University of Oregon
in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

August 1969

APPROVED: Earl Pomeroy
(Adviser for the Dissertation, Earl S. Pomeroy)

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The writer is deeply indebted to Earl S. Pomeroy, the adviser for the dissertation, and the other members of his committee: Thomas P. Govan, and Edwin R. Bingham, Department of History; G. Benton Johnson, Department of Sociology; and Martin Schmitt, Curator of Special Collections, University of Oregon. He acknowledges also the kindnesses of Dorothy O. Johansen, Department of History, and Luella Pollock, Librarian, Reed College, Portland, Oregon; Richard Segasture, Librarian, Starr King School for the Ministry, Berkeley, California; Clarke D. Wells, Minister, and Evadne Hilands, Historian, First Unitarian Society, Portland, Oregon; Grace Eliot Scott, Portland, Oregon; Richard Lytle, Archivist, and William Deiss, Archival Assistant, Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri; Stuart Stimmel, Director of the Boys and Girls Aid Society of Oregon; the staff of the Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon; Doris Boylan, typist and friend; and Joann Scheck, who wore many hats in helping her husband.

To Joann, John and Jay
in celebration of four
happy years in Eugene

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter		Page
I.	A YANKEE IN MISSOURI	1
II.	THE GENESIS OF A MOVEMENT	49
III.	THE QUEST FOR STATUS	76
IV.	BISHOP WITHOUT PORTFOLIO	109
V.	THE DENOMINATIONALIST	149
VI.	THE IDEALIST AS EDUCATOR	180
VII.	BUILDING AGENCIES OF HOPE	217
VIII.	MINISTERING TO MISFITS	247
IX.	THE CALL TO SOCIAL REFORM	286
X.	A MAN IN MOTION	331
EPILOGUE		366
	A NEW CAREER FOR A NEW CENTURY	366
A NOTE ON SOURCES		373

PREFACE

On November 21, 1912, Abbot L. Mills, president of the First National Bank of Oregon, resigned from the finance committee of the Portland Art Association. In his letter of resignation to the Reverend Thomas Lamb Eliot, Unitarian minister and vice president of the Association, Mills admitted that the task of soliciting funds was distasteful to him and that he was not "Jesuit enough to justify the method for the sake of the result." In his reply to Mills (whose resignation he refused to accept), Eliot reflected on the purpose of his own mission in Oregon: "It seems to me," he suggested, "this community must rise to the privilege of larger giving for the major uses of community life, and we who have traditions must stick together to inspire the unawakened man. What else are we here for?"

Eliot came to Oregon in 1867 because traditions of family, religion and class had stimulated his interest in awakening men to their religious and civic responsibilities. The most influential of these traditions was the example of his father, William Greenleaf Eliot, who, prompted by the same sense of mission, had carried the dual blessings of liberal religion and New England civilization to St. Louis and the Mississippi Valley a generation earlier.

As missionary, educator, reformer and builder of institutions, Eliot contributed significantly to many aspects of Oregon's social development. The ingredient common to all of his activities was the intention to pattern Western society after Eastern models and construct a kingdom of righteousness in Oregon according to blueprints drawn in New England and St. Louis. Eliot thought of himself as the agent of moral forces working to build a better, more righteous America through liberal Christianity.

Partly social history, not quite church history, almost biography, the story of Eliot's attempts to realize his personal and professional ideals is a case study in the movement of "culture," an examination of the mode by which social values made their way across the country. "Transplanting a Tradition" seeks to describe one variety of reform; to uncover its motives, explore its methods and estimate its achievements.

The study concludes at the point where Eliot began a new career as founder of Reed College. Although an analysis of Eliot's role in shaping Portland's first nonsectarian college might logically conclude the account of his career, present circumstances preclude the possibility. It is likely that a history of Reed College will appear in the near future, and that it will speak liberally of Thomas Lamb Eliot and the traditions he transmitted to "the Harvard of the West."

CHAPTER I

A YANKEE IN MISSOURI

> Free pulpits, free schools and the
> infusion of New England blood . . .
> the leaven of salvation to the
> whole state.
>
> William Greenleaf Eliot,
> May 11, 1864

Thomas Lamb Eliot was born into a family that venerated a tradition of public service and literary achievement. Several ancestors (including a Sir Thomas Elyot) had been prominent in English history, and the American branch of the family had produced many worthy members since its patriarch, Andrew Eliot, settled in Beverly, Massachusetts, in 1668. Among the notable progenitors were Thomas's great-grandfather, William Greenleaf, a revolutionary patriot and friend of George Washington; his great aunt, Abigail, wife of President John Adams; and his uncle, Christopher Pearse Cranch, a poet of the transcendental movement. Others of the family had become successful merchants, ministers and judges. Young Eliots such as Thomas were to find the accumulated family tradition a force to be reckoned with in their own lives.

Thomas's father, William Greenleaf Eliot, was a zealous exemplar of the tradition of service. Born in 1811 to a New Bedford, Massachusetts, merchant, William had spent most of his early life in Washington, D. C. after his father accepted a position with the Post Office Department. Following graduation from Columbian College in Washington, William Eliot also worked briefly in the Post Office before entering Harvard Divinity School in 1831. At Cambridge and in Boston, where such founders of Unitarianism as Henry Ware, James Freeman and William Ellery Channing were still articulating the tenets of liberal Christianity,[1] Eliot found a calling congenial to his nature He was ordained by Channing into the Unitarian ministry at the Federal Street Church, Boston, in August 1834 and departed for St. Louis several months later to serve a small group of New England Unitarians living there. The task of refining the manners and reforming the morals of a frontier settlement seemed sufficiently challenging for him to consider it as a life's work even before he had left Boston. "If I come," he had written to James Freeman Clarke, a friend from Harvard and Unitarian missionary in Louisville, "I come to remain and to lay my ashes in the Valley of the Mississippi."[2]

---

[1] Ware's election as Hollis Professor of Divinity at Harvard touched off the "Unitarian Controversy" in 1805; James Freeman had transformed King's Chapel, Boston, from the first Protestant Episcopal Church in America to the first Unitarian church; Channing was minister of the Federal Street Church in Boston and the most influential of the first generation of Unitarians. See Conrad Wright, The Beginnings of Unitarianism in America (Boston, 1966), 252-280.

Thomas's mother shared with William Eliot both descent from the Greenleafs and warm affection for New England. The daughter of a long-time (1801-1855) judge of the United States Circuit Court for the District of Columbia, Abigail Adams Cranch treasured memories of the ancestral home in Quincy, Massachusetts, where her family had been prominent for generations. Abigail married William Eliot in Washington in 1837 and accompanied her husband to his Western parish in mid-summer. The journey on dilapidated stages and creeping canal boats was a test of endurance. The final leg of the trip on the Mississippi took two weeks because of treacherous sand bars and low water. Yet, as Abigail Eliot recalled for a grandson, she and her husband were "young and strong and full of hope and the hardships were easily borne."[3] The difficulties of travel were in reality but an inconvenient preliminary to the greater hardships of life and death that lay ahead of her.

---

[2] William G. Eliot to James Freeman Clarke, cited in Charles H. Lytle, Freedom Moves West: A History of the Western Unitarian Conference 1852-1892 (Boston, 1952), 36.

Thomas Lamb Eliot, the third child of William and Abigail Eliot, was born October 13, 1841, and named for an uncle, Thomas Lamb, a merchant of Boston. His older brother, William, died six weeks after Thomas was born. An older sister, Mary, was seventeen at her death in 1856. Nine of Tom's brothers and sisters died in infancy or childhood, four of them in a span of three years, 1856-1858. Death and mourning were sobering aspects of life that Tom experienced frequently. One of the most vivid impressions of his youth was the traumatic effect of Mary's funeral:

> As we got near the church, the fearful truth burst upon me with ten-fold earnestness and I sobbed bitterly. . . . Until dear sister was in the earth I had entertained a vague hope that it might have been a trance or a swoon. But alas, all my hopes were blasted when the earth covered her body.

The next day Tom attended school as usual, though "full of sorrowful thoughts"; considerately, his teachers did not call on him.[4]

---

[3] From a recollection by Thomas Stearns Eliot, cited in "The Eliot Family of St. Louis," Washington University Studies. New Series, Language and Literature, XXXIII (St. Louis, 1953), 33.

Matured by tragedy and the weight of responsibility, Tom nevertheless had a happy childhood. His father, in fact, marveled that the loss of eight children in twenty years had left no gloomy imprint upon the survivors. Though he felt "grey, subdued and careworn, a centenarian at fifty," he rejoiced that there were "no happier children in the world and none better" than his own.[5] Tom and his younger brother Henry, whom everyone called "Hal," spent their free time in activities that ranged from the mischievous to the macabre. During the fierce cholera epidemic that decimated St. Louis in 1849, the brothers, then eight and six, fashioned a make-believe cemetery and buried clay effigies for amusement. They followed fire runs and looted marbles from the ashes of a toy shop. With the neighborhood gang they congregated in the loft of an empty shed to smoke catalpa bean pods.[6]

---

[4] Thomas Lamb Eliot, "Journal" (1855), 26-29, in Thomas Lamb Eliot Papers, Reed College, Portland, Oregon. This collection contains some 77 separate journals and diaries of Thomas Lamb Eliot (hereafter, TLE in citations) in addition to nearly ten thousand letters to and from Eliot and hundreds of sermon and other manuscripts. Unless otherwise attributed, all subsequent citations to journals, diaries, correspondence and manuscripts will refer to the Thomas Lamb Eliot Papers at Reed College.

[5] William G. Eliot to "Dear Count," April 6, 1862, William Greenleaf Eliot Papers, Washington University Archives, St. Louis, Missouri. Subsequent citations to this collection will be designated WGE.

Tom and Hal regarded their father with reverential awe, "whom to hear was to obey." His study was the "holy of holies" and they seldom saw the inside of it. For that matter, they seldom saw their father. Under normal conditions, they were "wholly under the watchful care of their mother," but their father so regularly attended them when they were sick that the boys came to associate him with the "taste of quinine and castor oil." They attempted "no undue familiarity" with their father, Hal recalled, thinking of James Freeman Clarke's remark about William Eliot: "How can one be familiar with the Day of Judgement?"[7] William Eliot so dominated the family, in fact, that a grandson born the year after his death "grew up very much aware of him: so much so, that as a child [he] thought of him as still the head of the family--a ruler for whom in absentia my grandmother stood as viceregent." Thomas Stearns Eliot, Hal's son, lovingly remembered the benevolent despotism of his grandfather: "The standard of conduct was that which my grandfather had set; our moral judgments, our decisions between duty and self-indulgence, were taken as if, like Moses, he had brought down the tables of the Law, any deviation from which would be sinful."[8]

---

[6] Henry Ware Eliot, "A Brief Autobiography," 1-21, WGE. Hal was the father of T. S. Eliot.

[7] Ibid., 25.

Tom learned to appreciate later in life the demands that kept his father away from home in body, if not in spirit. There was first of all his congregation, the Church of the Messiah, which had grown markedly in size and influence during his ministry. Not only had it moved from a school room (1834) to a Masonic hall (1835) to a building of its own (1837) to a Gothic structure seating twelve hundred persons (1851), it had also undertaken during the same period an extensive program of social welfare.[9] The "ministry-at-large," established in 1840 for the relief of the poor and the care of needy children, reflected William Eliot's fundamental conviction that the focus of a minister's work ought to be on "philanthropy, education, charity, institutions of reform and other enterprises for public benefit" rather than on "mere sectarian work" which he regarded as "secondary and subordinate to the general good."[10] All of this took its toll in time and energy.

---

[8] T.S. Eliot, "American Literature and the American Language," Washington University Studies. New Series, Language and Literature, XXXIII (1953), 4. The poet humorously suggested that the impress of his grandfather's "law of public service" upon his own mind left him with "an uncomfortable and very inconvenient obligation to serve upon committees."

[9] John Thomas Scharf, History of St. Louis City and County from the Earliest Periods to the Present Day (2 vols., Philadelphia, 1883), II, 1728-1730.

There were, moreover, the educational needs of the city, for which William Eliot felt a deep sense of personal responsibility. St. Louis had had no public schools at all whe he arrived in 1834, and the completion of the first building in 1838 was "of little interest except to the builders." And although it was theoretically public, the first school was not free because there were no provisions for a tax to support it.[11] In addition, qualified teachers were not available, and the apathy toward public education generally stood in striking contrast to the zeal with which the Roman Catholic hierarchy attended to its growing parochial system. When William Eliot became president of the school board in 1848, he moved to counter these negative tendencies. He initiated a petition calling for a property tax and urged it upon the city council, simultaneously memorializing the Senate and House of Representatives of Missouri

---

[10] Charlotte C. Eliot, William Greenleaf Eliot: Minister, Educator, Philanthropist (Boston, 1904), 65.

[11] Scharf, History of St. Louis, I, 834-837.

"to broaden the base of educational opportunity for the children of St. Louis."[12] When the issue came before the people in 1849, members of Eliot's congregation went from house to house to get out the vote. He also persuaded the board to plan for the erection of a second school and "imported" a set of new teachers from New England, housing four of them himself until he could find them lodging. During his term as president of the board, Eliot allotted several days each week to school business, more than he felt he could properly spare.[13]

Tom watched the creation of Washington University carve away another sizable portion of his father's time. William Eliot had asked Wayman Crow, a member of his congregation and also a state representative, to secure from the Missouri Legislature an appropriation for work among the depressed classes of St. Louis. Crow secured the grant, but he also brought back to Eliot, quite unexpectedly, the charter for a college to be called "Eliot Seminary." The charter was a generous document because, as Eliot interpreted it, it allowed "us to establish anything we pleased." It designated

---

[12] William G. Eliot, Notebook 1, August 2, 1848, WGE.

[13] Ibid.; C.C. Eliot, William G. Eliot, 70-78. William Eliot later maintained that Missouri was saved for the Union by the "establishment in St. Louis of the New England system of free education."

Eliot as chairman of the board, and since the board was to consist of sixteen of Eliot's parishioners, the institution was to be something of a Unitarian enterprise. The date of the charter, February 22, 1853, suggested the name Washington Institute as more suitable than the original. Initially a cluster of technical and preparatory schools, the Institute moved under Eliot's guidance to the threshold of university status by the eve of the Civil War. Supported financially in this work by benefactors in Boston as well as in St. Louis, Eliot looked to Harvard as the model for his institution and longed to see Washington University become for "the whole Valley of the Mississippi what Harvard has been to New England."[14]

Other responsibilities rapidly claimed the small intervals in William Eliot's life that church and school left unfilled. Missionary excursions took him to cities as close as Alton, Illinois and as far away as New Orleans, while a seemingly endless stream of visitors interrupted his study time at home, cut his life up into "little pieces," and prevented the composition of the books that he yearned to write.[15] Taken together with his precarious health and fragile constitution, the pressures of William Eliot's profession left little time for his family.

---

[14] C.C. Eliot, William G. Eliot, 82-103; William G. Eliot, "A Statement relating to the Endowment of Washington University," May 11, 1864, WGE.

Relations between father and sons changed markedly in 1856, however. Tom was fifteen when William Eliot sold his house on Eighth street and purchased Beaumont Place, once the home of Governor Hamilton Gamble of Missouri. Maintenance of the homestead of four acres on the western fringe of St. Louis, with its timber, groves, gardens and rambling out-buildings, required a cooperative family effort. Consequently, relations between Tom and Hal and their father became "very close and intimate."[16]

Tom thoroughly enjoyed the change to rural living. He and Hal "took charge of everything on the place," dividing the care of the animals between them. Hal assumed responsibility for the horse and chickens, while Tom cared for the cow. Their days were long and full, beginning at four or four-thirty in the morning with study and chores, and ending around nine in the evening. William Eliot taught his sons how to cultivate a vegetable garden, and they were soon able to supply the household with "everything it needed for the table." There was sometimes an opportunity for recreation on the weekends. With Tom's prized shotgun they hunted snipe, plover and pigeons. They fished and swam in the summer and skated in the winter. During the years at Beaumont Place, they came to know their father, who, when at home, was "far more a companion than a parent," and whose own health improved greatly in the more rural environment. "Those years," concluded Hal, "were among the happiest of our lives."[17]

---

[15] William G. Eliot, Notebook 3, January 3, 1850, WGE. He wanted to write a book as "something that will remain."

[16] Henry Ware Eliot, "A Brief Autobiography," 40; William G. Eliot, note on housing, September 26, 1856, WGE; William G. Eliot The Story of Archer Alexander: From Slavery to Freedom (Boston, 1885), 54-55.

Tom attended public school in St. Louis and worked hard to stand at the head of his class. He kept a watchful eye on the marks and demerits of his classmates and delighted in telling his parents whenever he bettered his peers. Of his own demerits for desk carvings and such, he was less anxious to speak. An avid reader, he devoured Nicholas Nickleby, Oliver Twist and other classics of the period with enthusiasm. He learned to dance and at parties enjoyed the company and attention of girls. Yet he took seriously the resolutions his father asked him to make: never to use profane or indecent language and to abstain from the use of tobacco, cards and intoxicants until he was twenty-one. With several friends he organized a debating society called the Everett Lyceum, and as its secretary carefully recorded the substance of debates on such topics as prohibition, prevention of crime, usefulness of the telegraph and the annexation of Cuba.[18]

---

[17] Henry Ware Eliot, "A Brief Autobiography," 40-42. The family lived at Beaumont Place from 1856 to 1869, except for the years 1860-1861 when they lived in the William Smith home while Smith was in Europe. The early years at Beaumont Place were sad ones for William and Abigail Eliot, and Eliot reflects them in his book of meditations, The Discipline of Sorrow (Cambridge, 1858).

Whenever possible, the family spent part of a summer together in New England. When William Eliot was unable to leave St. Louis, Tom and Hal went by themselves to visit relatives in Boston or New Bedford. "Be as good as you possibly can," William Eliot counseled his sons during the summer of 1854," and show the Yankees what nice boys we have in St. Louis."[19] Some vivid impressions remained of those New England summers. In 1858 there was a nostalgic return to "Old Quincy" where Tom had spent the entire summer of 1852, and a perplexing morning in the company of his uncle Thomas Lamb in Boston. Tom thought it "queer" how his uncle managed his business, how he snubbed his customers and treated them rudely. New England became a familiar second home to Tom, and while he admitted to periods of homesickness, his summers in Boston and New Bedford were part of a valuable schooling in the larger cultural context of the family tradition.[20]

---

[18] TLE, "Journals" (1854-1858); William G. Eliot, "Four Resolutions," October 19, 1855; "Journal of the Everett Lyceum" (1858).

[19] William G. Eliot to TLE and Henry Ware Eliot, July 15, 1854, WGE.

Early opportunities for independent travel acquainted Tom with still other parts of the country and different kinds of people. In the summer of 1859, in company with two friends from St. Louis, he took a Mississippi steamer from St. Louis to St. Paul. Half of his fellow passengers were raftsmen returning upriver, whose shipboard existence was an unending round of "drinking, swearing and card playing at a great rate." He refused a dozen or more drinks, and the equivalent of at least a box of cigars. The crew regarded Tom and his friends as the "gentlemen" of the boat and kept them well supplied with fresh iced milk and jellies not furnished to the "heathen," because of which Tom heard a good bit of grumbling. The "heathen," however, had the bar, "the vital organ of the boat," manned by an extremely ugly specimen of humanity whose jaws ground endlessly on a quill toothpick. Always an interested observer of people, Tom found in his travels much to deepen an impression that all humanity fitted roughly into one of two categories, the better and the baser sort.[21]

---

[20] TLE to Abigail A. Eliot, July 23, 1858; TLE to William G. Eliot and Abigail A. Eliot, July 15, 1858.

A voyage to California in 1860 differed markedly from his earlier travels in the quality of his experiences. Since his fifteenth year, Tom had complained of sore eyes, especially after long periods of reading or other concentrated use. In February 1860 he discontinued his studies at Washington University and sought expert medical opinion in Boston, though his father, always skeptical of medical science, doubted whether such opinion existed. Grandmother Eliot provided restful lodging while Tom underwent various kinds of treatment during the spring. There was little discernible improvement in his eyes, and Tom, hoping that a completely different kind of activity might bring relief, resolved upon an extended sea voyage as the best possible sort of change. Charles Ranlett, brother of one of his father's parishioners and captain of a clipper ship, the Golden State, invited Tom to sail with him for China via Cape Horn and San Francisco.[22] The length of Tom's stay in China was to be indeterminate; should he wish to remain for several years, he had the opportunity to clerk in the house of Rupelt and Company.

---

[21] TLE, "Trip to the Upper Mississippi" (1859). This is the first of Eliot's travel journals illustrated with clever caricatures and sketches.

The Golden State departed New York June 21, 1860, under what Thomas Lamb reported as "very favorable circumstances" for his nephew. It was a good ship with a good master, and Tom's quarters were comfortable enough with two berths, a window and ample space for his needs. Tom was completely outfitted with clothes, had medicines of his own, and, according to his uncle's estimate, would likely enjoy excellent meals at the captain's table. Lamb had personally checked out the list of cabin stores and found it heavy on tinned delicacies, light on salt meat. Unfortunately--and this was the only negative note in Lamb's report--the ship had sailed two full days before scheduled to do so, and Tom, with barely two hours' notice, had left his papers and letters of introduction behind.[23] It was a subtle forecast of what lay ahead.

---

[22] Earl Morse Wilbur, Thomas Lamb Eliot 1841-1936 (Portland, 1937), 10-11.

[23] Thomas Lamb to William G. Eliot, June 23, 1860; June 26, 1860.

The voyage was really quite pleasant at first, with agreeable weather, good company and many things to learn. Together with David Ranlett, a nephew of the captain and his only fellow passenger, Tom studied nautical equipment and technique, climbed in the rigging and garnered various specimens of sea life for the cans of alcohol that Professor Louis Agassiz had sent along. The painful condition of his eyes, accentuated by the glare from the sea, made it impossible for Tom to do much reading, and the "Merchant's Assistant" that his uncle had provided for "a proper knowledge of bookkeeping" went unused. David read to him by the hour, however, and since his friend was a law student, Tom by mid-passage had heard an audible rendition of all of Kent's Commentaries on American Law.

Tom's morale paralleled the downturn in the weather as the Golden State penetrated more deeply into the South Atlantic. It became less pleasant to be on deck, legal subtleties were less interesting and earlier novelties had become monotonies. Worst of all, his eyes did not improve, and he began to brood about the implications their impairment held for his future. While he resolved to await the course of events "without a single anxious or distrustful thought," his "blue thoughts" frequently got the best of him, and he resorted to all sorts of "dodges" to shake them off. Most often he would walk the decks repeating poetry he had once memorized. Every application of his eyes to a task, even mending his coat, quickly fatigued him and terrified him with the thought that he would never be able to work with books again. Mentally he abandoned cherished plans for the ministry and yearned to be home. He had eagerly awaited the "rounding of the Horn"; but once it was accomplished, all he had left to anticipate was more endless months at sea with his thoughts. He found much grim truth in the personal application of Captain Ranlett's observation that "a clipper ship is a floating hell."[24]

The Golden State entered the Golden Gate on October 29, 1860, over four months and 17,000 miles out of New York. New sailing orders awaited her, rerouting her toward Liverpool rather than China. Tom felt it useless to continue the voyage in any case and decided to remain in San Francisco until he could hear from his parents. He found a room for ten dollars a month and set about seeing what he could of California. Among the first places he visited was the Unitarian chapel where Thomas Starr King was preaching liberal Christianity to large and enthusiastic audiences. Tom's cousin, John Dawes, introduced him to King, who became his friend and counselor for the eight weeks Tom remained in California. Tom visited Sacramento, Stockton, San Jose and Monterey; he hunted, toured the mines and visited Chinatown.[25]

---

[24] TLE, "Journal of Incidents in a Voyage from New York to San Francisco" (1860-61), esp. 54, 89-94 and 128. Four years later his fiancée, Henrietta Mack, read this journal and annotated it as follows: "This is what I had thought and knew must have been when I said long ago I knew what you had gone through at sea, and saw its effects in your present character."

News of the secession of South Carolina reached San Francisco on November 24, and Tom immediately became anxious about its possible effects on St. Louis and Missouri. The Golden State sailed on November 27, taking two of his close friends with it and deepening an already desperate sense of homesickness. A message from his father finally arrived, bringing permission to return home as quickly as possible. In a misty December rain, with a borrowed umbrella, he paid a farewell call on Starr King, whom he found "full of kindness and good wishes," and boarded the P. M. S. S. Sonora on December 20 for the return voyage via the Isthmus of Panama. Among the forty-one cabin passengers were a number of whalers, "New Bedford Gentlemen," who shared common acquaintances with Tom, but who annoyed him with the great clouds of smoke they blew in his face. There was also a new friend from San Francisco, Henry Webster, whose company Tom preferred. After the Isthmian portage, he and Webster boarded the steamer North Star for the final voyage to New York. The temperature was well below zero when the pair entrained for Boston, and Tom suffered from a heavy cold. Webster insisted that Tom wear his bearskin coat in the drafty coach, an act of kindness that Tom credited with saving his life. At the Lambs' he found an abundance of warmth and sympathy. "O God," he asked, "is it wrong to think so much of it?"[26]

---

[25] Ibid., 176. Of the Chinese whom he observed in San Francisco, he asked rhetorically, "Are they human?"

Tom returned to St. Louis to find the city girding for war and his father attempting to protect his church and university from the divisive effects of the sectional conflict. Both institutions were vulnerable to disruption because they drew support from partisans of both sides. William Eliot had foreseen the approaching difficulties as early as 1848 when he began commending to the slave states, and Missouri in particular, the prudence of initiating some form of voluntary emancipation.[27] The substance of his argument from the very beginning was economic rather than moral, however. He appealed to the self-interest of the whites rather than the welfare of the Negroes. Slavery he adjudged harmful "because a humane master cannot make it profitable." Immediate abolition he envisioned as being "ruinous to the blacks and a great evil to the whites." While he conceded that gradual emancipation in Missouri would probably precipitate a massive sale of slaves to the deep South, it would at least give "a fair chance to the white man, which he can never have where slavery exists." He freely admitted that he spoke not as "a Negro-lover. . . but as a laboring man and a friend of 'Free Labor.'"[28] He reiterated this position to Thomas Hart Benton, and urged the Senator to work for "prudent, conservative legislation" because "all great changes in the social system, to be well made must be gradual."[29]

---

[26] Ibid., 182-197 and ff. (pagination ends at 197). The continuation of this journal and several other journals which Eliot labeled "chance heart records" he requested to have destroyed after his death. "They relieved my heart," as he wrote them, he noted, "refreshed and rebuked" him as he read them; but they were for his eyes alone. His son burned them on January 25, 1940. Even without them, however, Eliot's early journals reveal an intensely introspective personality. See also Wilbur, Eliot, 32, 124, note 29.

---

[27] William G. Eliot, Notebook 1, 1848, 127-128, WGE.

[28] William G. Eliot, "Slave Labor and Gradual Emancipation," draft of an article for the People's Organ, Notebook 1, September 20, 1848, WGE.

[29] William G. Eliot to Thomas Hart Benton, cited in Charlotte C. Eliot, William G. Eliot, 145.

Eliot's position became a difficult tightrope to walk in the 1850s not only because Southern spokesmen were becoming more militant in defense of their peculiar institution but also because his co-religionists were fastening the abolitionist label to all Unitarians indiscriminately. It was impossible for Eliot to fully dissociate himself, for example, from a declaration by a majority of the nation's Unitarian clergymen in 1845 that branded slavery "unchristian and inhuman";[30] it was also impossible for him to satisfactorily explain an article in the denominational organ, the Christian Register, that misrepresented individual instances of manumission by Eliot's members as congregational policy;[31] it was, finally, equally impossible for him to countenance the procedures of the Western Unitarian Conference at Alton in 1857 when the assembly forsook its own prohibition against collective expression in order to pass resolutions strongly condemning slavery. Though Eliot had founded the Conference only five years before, he withdrew in protest and defended his action from the pulpit of his church. The only Christian and practical solution to the problem of slavery, he told his congregation, was "the removal of social wrong by establishing the kingdom of God in the individual heart." The collective work of the church was to be "strictly personal and religious," preparing the way for every social reform by "sowing the seeds of Christian truth and righteousness." Providence, he urged, "works fast enough; trust God's wisdom more and our own less."[32]

---

[30] George Willis Cooke, Unitarianism in America: A History of its Origin and Development (Boston, 1902), 360-361.

[31] In a letter to the Register, William Eliot not only stated that "it is better to do too little than to do what must be undone," but he also suggested that "unwise interference of societies and individuals who are too far distant from the scene to know what ought to be done" was not needed. William G. Eliot, draft to the editor of the Christian Register, Notebook 4, November 15, 1853, WGE.

Secession pitched Eliot and his family headlong into the Union camp. His sermons on loyalty soon accomplished what he had long feared that any tinge of abolitionism might precipitate; they divided his congregation and offended many parishioners who were sympathetic to the Confederacy. His personal physician, Dr. William Carr Lane, was among the most bitter; his cousin's wife, Kate Appleton, a bridesmaid for his wife at their wedding, "was intensely secesh" and publicly stated that she was carrying a pistol and "would shoot either

---

[32] William G. Eliot, Social Reform: A Discourse Delivered in the Church of the Messiah, St. Louis, May 24, 1857, by William Greenleaf Eliot (St. Louis, 1857). Interestingly, Eliot's associate, Carlton Staples, remained a member of the Conference.

Mr. Yeatman or Mr. Eliot if either spoke to her."[33] Secession also placed Washington University in a precarious position. When word reached Eliot that Chancellor William Hoyt had implicitly criticized the South, the chairman of the board felt it necessary to warn the chancellor, lest his views "imperil the prosperity of the institution and materially diminish its endowment."[34] The war itself brought a severe financial crisis to the University as well as to the Church of the Messiah and forced Eliot to retrench on program, salaries and staff.[35]

The war also had its effects on Tom and the remainder of William Eliot's family. Beaumont Place was perilously situated between rival encampments during the early part of the war when guerrilla bands penetrated outlying areas of the city. Camp Jackson, a secessionist bivouac, was a half-mile distant on one side, and when General Lyon and the Home Guards broke it up, rifle bullets came dangerously near the Eliot home. The Union forces on the other side were the nearer menace. A volunteer regiment under Colonel B. Gratz Brown was quartered in Uhrig's Cave, a dilapidated barn adjacent to Beaumont Place. They were wont to conduct what Eliot called "clumsy maneuvers" which on one occasion sent volleys of bullets whistling through the Eliot grounds, piercing the fences and quite badly frightening the family, all of whom were out of doors at the time. Eliot protested this "criminal discharge" of a "low, ignorant Dutch soldiery and a drunken colonel" in a note to Gratz Brown and invited him to come over to inspect the damage.[36] More of a nuisance than a danger was the soldierly practice of sneaking into the Eliot orchards at night to steal fruit. One evening William Eliot, with revolver in hand and sons at his heels, charged into the orchard to intercept the raiders, firing his pistol in the air to scare them off. When a terrified, though unwounded, volunteer fell from the nearest tree begging for mercy, an even more terrified preacher promptly unloaded his revolver and the next day gave it away.[37]

---

[33] Henry Ware Eliot, "A Brief Autobiography," 44-45. James E. Yeatman, a member of Eliot's congregration, was prominent as president of the Western Sanitary Commission.

[34] William G. Eliot, draft to Chancellor William Hoyt, Notebook 5, December 19, 1860, WGE.

[35] William G. Eliot, Notebook 6, April 18, 1861, WGE.

---

[36] William G. Eliot, The Story of Archer Alexander, 54-56; Notebook 6, July 27, 1861, WGE. Brown became successively a general, a Senator from Missouri, a governor of Missouri and vice-presidential candidate with Horace Greeley in 1872.

[37] Henry Ware Eliot, "A Brief Autobiography," 58.

Tom served for nearly a year with the Halleck Guard, a volunteer unit of seventy young men from St. Louis. It was one of a number of such units that Brigadier General John M. Schofield had mustered to clear Confederate guerrillas from Missouri. Tom supposed that his service would involve little more than drilling, and his first reports seemed to confirm that expectation. He wrote his mother of "marching, singing John Brown's bones, hurrahing, getting speeches and busting generally."[38] Actually, the Guard did considerably more than drill. During August 1862 it patrolled the Missouri River as far as Kansas City, and later in the fall it went to Boonville when General Sterling Price threatened Jefferson City. The only shot Tom fired, however, was at a deserter.[39] He received his discharge from the Halleck Guard on June 30, 1863. A year later the Missouri Board of Enrollment called him for service, but his father engaged a substitute for him for $350, and Tom spent the remainder of the war as a civilian.[40]

---

[38] TLE to Abigail A. Eliot, July 27, 1862, WGE.

[39] Wilbur, Eliot, 14, 122, note 16.

[40] A newspaper clipping listed the substitute's name as Lazzarias, but Tom's official papers listed it as William Zaggnass. Certificate of Non-liability, August 1, 1864; receipt from War Claims Office of Cavender and Rowe, August 3, 1864; T. Gilchrist to TLE, July 16, 1863. William Eliot also twice purchased substitutes for

As time and opportunity allowed, Tom aided his father in efforts to "humanize" the war for Union forces in the West. With the aid of Dorothea Dix and General John C. Frémont, William Eliot had established the Western Sanitary Commission in September 1861,[41] and although his friend James Yeatman served as president of the Commission, much of the actual work of inspecting camps, soliciting funds, filling requisitions and organizing sanitary fairs fell to Eliot.[42] In this work, as with the University, Eliot depended heavily upon friends in New England for financial support, and they responded with a large outpouring of gifts.[43] There was a conspicuously large proportion of items from Boston, Cambridge and New Bedford among the articles that Tom prepared for sale at the

---

Hal for $300. Hal wanted to fight, however, and he ultimately received the commission he had sought. The commission papers never arrived, however, and Hal regarded it as "the greatest disappointment of my life." Later he discovered that his father's influential parishioner, Judge Samuel Treat, had had the appointment cancelled. Hal was not proud of his war record, three months of guard duty in the city, and he envied Tom's service with the Halleck Guard. Henry Ware Eliot, "A Brief Autobiography," 52-53.

[41] William G. Eliot, "Suggestions Submitted for a Sanitary Commission for the Department of the West," Notebook 6, September 3, 1861, 59. WGE.

[42] Charlotte C. Eliot, William G. Eliot, 212-278.

[43] William G. Eliot, Notebook 6, n.d., 163. WGE.

Mississippi Valley Sanitary Fair in May 1864, an event that brought over a half million dollars into the coffers of the Commission.[44] There were, for example, 117 boxes of miscellany patiently gathered by his aunt, Hannah Lamb, that included, as contributions to the war effort, a picture painted by C. P. Cranch, a box of shells from Dr. Agassiz and a croquet set from the ladies of Dorchester.[45]

In spite of interruptions for travel, health and military service, Tom was able to keep sufficiently abreast of his studies to graduate with the first class of Washington University on June 20, 1862. For two years following graduation he served his father's parish as superintendent of the Mission Free School, where his chief responsibilities were to direct educational work among poor children. Concurrently, he served first as tutor, then assistant instructor in Greek and Latin at Smith Academy, Washington University's preparatory school for boys, worked toward his master's degree at the University, and read theology under his father's direction.[46]

---

[44] Scharf, History of St. Louis, I, 554-555.

[45] Hannah Lamb to TLE, April 23, 1864; May 13, May 19 and May 25, 1864.

[46] Wilbur, Eliot, 14. He received his M. A. on June 13, 1866, for a thesis entitled "Natural Problems." The Board of Managers of the Mission Free School appointed him superintendent March 25, 1864, retroactive to the previous November, at a salary of $1,000 a

Impatient to proceed with his formal theological education, Tom entered Harvard Divinity School in the autumn of 1864. His father's letters, disclaiming any intention of advising, came regularly, full of advice. "Find a good boarding house and live well," he counseled, supposing that a full stomach might deter Tom from long hours of evening study that could further injure his eyes. There was a refrain in those letters quite uncharacteristic of bill-paying fathers writing to sons in graduate school. "Festine lente," take it easy, came the admonition. "I advise for the year a good time generally. You can extend your preparation through another year or more if you please."[47] A hard-working perfectionist himself, William Eliot hoped to see his son adopt a more balanced and relaxed style of life than he had.

There developed during Tom's first year at Harvard, accordingly, a certain tension between William Eliot's desires and his own determination to accomplish as much as he felt a son of

---

year and with authority to hire and release all personnel. Tom's father reported that his eyes had not improved at all, but added: "He bears the trial well and fully keeps up to his class by having his books read to him. He learns by ear faster and more perfectly than any of his classmates can by eye." William G. Eliot to "Dear Count," April 6, 1862, WGE.

[47] William G. Eliot to TLE, September 1, 1864, WGE.

William Eliot should. Tom felt, for example, that he could complete the last two years of a three year course in one year, while his father urged him to do one year's work in one year and remain for a second year if the money was available. If the war should continue and money remain tight, Tom could always take another year of practical work in St. Louis under his direction. In either case, William Eliot warned, for Tom to strain his eyes under a double load would be "a loss every way."[48]

Another cause of anxiety to William Eliot was the theological climate of Harvard. His own views had remained relatively static over the course of thirty years, a period of great internal tension, and two distinct theological upheavals within Unitarianism. The first followed Ralph Waldo Emerson's "Divinity School Address" (1838), and the second Theodore Parker's sermon, "The Transient and Permanent in Christianity" (1841).[49] Parker's attack on orthodox

---

[48] _Ibid._, October 6, 1864; October 7, 1864, WGE.

[49] There is a very large literature on Emerson, Parker, the Transcendental movement and Unitarianism during this unsettled period. Most pertinent to this particular study are: Conrad Wright, ed., _Three Prophets of Religious Liberalism: Channing, Emerson, Parker_ (Boston, 1961), which gives the full texts of the two addresses mentioned in the text, as well as a helpful, critical introduction; and William R. Hutchison, _The Transcendentalist Ministers: Church Reform in the New England Renaissance_ (New Haven, 1959) which pulls

Unitarianism was the more radical of the two as it repudiated the inspired character of the New Testament, the uniqueness of Christ and the validity of miracles. As angry debates raged over Parker and his views, William Eliot lamented the "very unfixed position" of Unitarians and reaffirmed his own conservative positions on the controverted subjects. "For my part," he acknowledged,

> I believe in the New Testament and the whole of it. In the entire miraculousness of the Christian dispensation. From the miraculous prophecies in relation to it, to the miraculous birth of Christ, and to the miracles of his life, resurrection and ascension. In the absolute necessity of the Christian dispensation to our salvation. We cannot do without Christ. He has through God's appointment opened heaven to us. Not only us, but all--the heathen e.g. are saved thro him, if saved at all. He prays for us, and God hears us in our prayers not only for our own sake, and for his mercy's sake, but for Christ's sake. He is still the medium thro which spiritual blessings come to us, he is still the living, active head of the church.[50]

In a series of doctrinal sermons during the 1850s, Eliot revealed the essential elements of "Channing Unitarianism" still intact,[51] and

---

the complex threads together admirably. For a broader bibliography, see Hutchison, 209-223, and Nelson R. Burr, A Critical Bibliography of Religion in America (2 vols., Princeton, 1961), I, 219-319.

[50] William G. Eliot, Notebook 1, April 1848, WGE.

[51] Eliot proudly wore the label, "Channing Unitarian," which, though open to many definitions, was generally synonymous with evangelical Unitarianism." Stow Persons, Free Religion (Boston, 1963), defined it as a "faith centered upon supernatural revelation

when a vacancy threatened in the chancellorship of Washington University in 1864 he expressed his preference for "an earnest, sensible, orthodox man," perhaps an Episcopalian.[52] William Eliot was clearly wary of new theological fads and concerned lest Tom fall prey to them.

By the time Tom arrived at Cambridge, both Parker and Convers Francis, Parker's most devoted admirer on the Divinity School faculty, were dead.[53] Their spirit and a number of their views lingered on, however, aggressively in a coterie of friends and former students, more mildly in at least two incumbent professors. George Rappall Noyes, Dexter Professor of Biblical

---

in the unique figure of Christ, confirmed by miracles." Joseph Henry Allen and Richard Eddy, A History of the Unitarians and the Universalists (New York, 1894), 195-201, suggested that the term signified the desire to remain within lines of church tradition, and to make conscience, rather than intellect or sentiment, the object of its appeal. Hutchison, Transcendental Ministers, 199, defines "Channing Unitarianism" as the coupling of free inquiry with the acceptance of revealed Christianity. Eliot's sermons, later published by the American Unitarian Association as Discourses on the Doctrines of Christianity (Boston, 1873) qualify their author as a "Channing Unitarian" by any of these definitions.

[52] William G. Eliot to TLE, September 11, 1864, WGE.

[53] Hutchinson, Transcendental Ministers, 197. Hutchison states that Convers Francis's proteges remembered him as one whose "receptivity to new ideas and constant encouragement of unfettered thought did much to inculcate a respect for Transcendental intuitionism."

Literature, though generally conservative, was not free from transcendental leanings, and he had arrived at some fairly radical conclusions about the nature of Old Testament prophecies.[54] Frederic Henry Hedge, Professor of Ecclesiastical History, on the other hand, had been at the very center of the Transcendental movement. His suggestion to Emerson in 1836 had sparked the discussions, and since the group convened whenever Hedge was able to come to Boston from his parish in Bangor, Maine, it was sometimes called "Hedge's Club." Hedge's views, tempered by his profound knowledge of history and deep respect for the Church as an organism, were not as radical on most points as Parker's, however. He felt, for example, that to dispense with Christ as the "divinely human Master and Head" would bring an end to Christianity. Miracles, on the other hand, he regarded as dispensable proofs for the validating of Christianity. Hedge was, in short, a moderate who like James Freeman Clarke sought to mediate between the extremes of skepticism and orthodox Unitarianism.[55]

---

[54] Ibid., 20, 88. Noyes had sided with Andrews Norton against George Ripley on Emerson's "Divinity School Address."

Harvard was quite obviously not as conservative as William Eliot would have preferred, and Tom's early letters, noting the liberalism he was encountering, did little to put his father's mind at rest. Eliot warned his son repeatedly of the dangers. On October 6 he wrote:

---

[55] Ibid., 47, 138-143; Ronald Vale Wells, Three Christian Transcendentalists (New York, 1943), 3-7, 96-145. Hutchison, Wells and almost all other writers on Transcendentalism stress nothing so much as its infinite diversity. Hutchison, for example, declares that the Transcendentalists were "most likeminded in their unabashed eclecticism" (50), while Wells suggests that one almost had to be a Transcendentalist himself to understand the "various exhibitions of this German mania" (7). Both writers shy away from a comprehensive definition of what a Transcendentalist was, though both also strongly suggest that the ingredient most common to all of them was a strong fascination with post-Kantian German idealism. Even William Eliot, a vocal opponent of transcendental tendencies within Unitarianism, read Kant, Fichte, Goethe and Madame de Staël and said of them: "German philosophy is the bugbear of our friends and is almost another name for infidelity; yet, if the learned are ever redeemed from skepticism, it must be by its influence. . . . My earnest prayer is that German literature and science may have free course among us." William G. Eliot to James Freeman Clarke, cited in C.C. Eliot, William G. Eliot, 10-11. It is difficult to judge the extent to which either William or Thomas Eliot were Trancendentalists. Thomas, who also read the Germans, was probably more of a Trancendentalist than his father, though both men, like Clarke and Hedge, were interested primarily in the practical aspects of the philosophy.

> Do not permit yourself to be carried away by the seeming profundity and boldness and novelty of modern skepticism. It is only a seeming, and the Unitarian manifestation of it is more deficient in depth of learning, I am sorry to say, than any other. Sound biblical learning is more neglected by liberal thinkers than any other class of theologians. Diluted metaphysics is the "chief of their diet."[56]

Two days later he suggested that the radicalism at Harvard might well limit Tom's stay there to one year:

> What you have said of the radicalism does not surprise me, and I should not be surprised if a year of it fully satisfies you. The distinctive advantages of the Harvard school are soon gained and I should like you to get the good without the evil. My own tendencies are constantly in the other direction. The exegetical and philosophical difficulties trouble my thoughts, not my faith. Even Spinoza makes a living, omnipresent God so essential to the soul that faith in his actual working is not difficult; and it would be an incredible thing if he had not revealed himself. But take it coolly. We don't know much and what we do know is not certain.[57]

Counseling Tom about the preparation of his first sermon, William Eliot commended the writings of Calvin, urging his son to take what was "good, noble and strong" from them, then to stand up and "preach Christ, not Thomas Lamb Eliot."[58]

---

[56] William G. Eliot to TLE, October 6, 1864, WGE.

[57] Ibid., October 8, 1864.

[58] Ibid., September 22, 1864. Both the middle and senior years of the theological course provided for student preaching in the chapel of Divinity Hall.

It is difficult to determine Tom's personal reaction to the various theological tendencies at Harvard or the extent to which he appropriated any one of them. There is some reason to believe, however, that Professor Hedge was influential in shaping his thought. Not only did Tom enjoy a fairly close relationship with the most prominent member of the Divinity School faculty, he also reflected in his later ministry some of Hedge's distinctive emphases on man, conscience, Jesus, Unitarianism and social activism.[59] Given the wide and diverse opportunities for discussion that Tom enjoyed at Harvard, however, any apparent similarities with Hedge may have been more a matter of coincidence than influence.

However Tom chose to regard his father's counsel on metaphysical questions, he chose to make his own decisions on more personal matters. He completed the last two years of the theological program in one year and qualified for graduation in the summer of 1865. The Rev. Samuel Hosmer wrote glowingly of the ceremony which William Eliot was not able to attend: "You should have been here yesterday to see yourself over again in your son," Hosmer began, "only that he speaks with rather more impressiveness than his father. His dissertation was simple, direct, weighty and beautiful. The audience was deeply impressed and it was a common remark among us yesterday 'how pleasant to see Eliot. . . in his son.'"[60] The pressures of paternal reputation, with the consequently great expectations it connoted, had already begun to build.

---

[59] Wells, Three Christian Transcendentalists, 96-145. Sydney E. Ahlstrom suggests that Harvard Divinity School was still in a predominantly conservative phase and under the "Old Regime" during the year Eliot attended; moreover, it was near the bottom of a precipitous decline in academic competence--the nadir, he claims, came in 1868-1869, just before the advent of President Eliot. George H. Williams, ed., Harvard Divinity School: Its Place in Harvard University and in American Culture (Boston, 1954), 89-130.

What Tom was to do after graduation had been a debated issue, and once again the wishes of father and son diverged. William Eliot wanted Tom to return to St. Louis as his associate. Tom, however, had serious misgivings about serving with a father whose ministry could easily overshadow and dominate his own. His father argued that a "distinctive work of his own" was possible for Tom very near him, yet Tom felt instinctively that any ministry in or near St. Louis had necessarily to be of short duration. William Eliot suggested that his son was prone to unduly magnify the difficulties and to worry too much whether he would be liked or not. Popularity, the elder Eliot suggested, was unimportant and would take care of itself.[61]

---

[60] S. W. Hosmer to William G. Eliot, July 19, 1865. Tom had graduated the day before. His "dissertation" was on "The Atonement."

[61] William G. Eliot to TLE, July 18, 1865, WGE.

Tom found it difficult to dismiss the problem so easily.

A young lady who liked Tom a great deal also had a stake in decisions about his career. Henrietta Robins Mack was the youngest daughter of Samuel Mack, a prominent insurance executive of St. Louis, and his wife Rebecca. Like her future husband, "Etta" could point to a distinguished New England ancestry on both sides of her lineage. From her father's family she was a direct descendant of the Mathers, and a number of the Mayflower Pilgrims, including Myles Standish, were among her mother's ancestors. Four years Tom's junior, Etta had met him shortly after his return from California in 1861, and their relationship, at first casual, had become serious by the summer of 1863.[62] On June 30 they gave their "heart's first plight," and shortly thereafter Etta wrote her mother that her mind was "settled in regard to Tom."[63] Rebecca Mack did not respond with unmixed enthusiasm to the engagement, however. Her objections were not to Tom personally, but to Etta's youth, the shortness of their formal courtship and, most strongly, to Tom's Unitarian religion.[64]

---

[62] Wilbur, Eliot, 16-18.

[63] TLE to Henrietta R. Mack (hereinafter HRE), June 30, 1865.

[64] Rebecca Mack to HRE, August 23, 1863.

Etta also had serious misgivings about the religious factor, as the Macks were devout Congregationalists and sixteen orthodox ministers ornamented the family tree. While she appreciated the necessity of sharing her husband's faith, she worried over the difficulty she had in doing so. She diligently studied the issues involved, weighing her lifelong beliefs against views that she had been taught were heretical. Poetic and sensitive, she was unable to bear the emotional strain and suffered a nervous breakdown in the spring of 1865. At Amherst, in the quiet of her grandmother's home, she struggled for resolution of her inner conflicts. There were times when she was able to write of having achieved happiness through resignation to the will of God,[65] other times when she felt that "new prejudices were simply overwhelming the old." Within weeks of Tom's graduation from Harvard, she felt she was able to speak of "our beliefs."[66]

With the slow return of Etta's health and Tom's firm decision to serve as his father's assistant for only a limited time, William

---

[65] HRE to TLE, July 17, 1865.

[66] Ibid., July 30, 1865. On November 28, 1866, a year after their marriage, Tom accompanied Etta to see Dr. Truman Post, minister of the First (Trinitarian) Congregational Church of St. Louis, to seek her transfer to his own church. TLE, "Journal" (1866), November 28, 1866.

Eliot thought it provident to outline the personal details of his son's immediate future. He suggested that he ordain Tom as an "Evangelist" in October and later marry the couple ("Etta consenting") in the "most quiet manner" with Hal as the groomsman; that they move into the Eliot home ("by all means not with Mrs. Mack") until the first of the year; and that Tom devote the first year of his marriage and ministry not to "overcrowded work" but to "diligence and learning."[67] With some small variations in detail, that is the way it happened.

Tom spent the summer and fall of 1865 supplying Unitarian pulpits in the Middle West, notably in Louisville. He took preaching seriously and aimed to make each sermon a work of distinction. "Let it not be thought anyone may write such," he said of one effort.[68] In October, the trustees of his father's church formally invited him to become associate pastor and minister-at-large at a salary of $1,500 a year. He was ordained by his father on November 19, and on November 28 he and Etta were married. After the wedding, the couple went by steamer down the Mississippi to New Orleans, where Tom preached to a small gathering of Unitarians each Sunday during their stay. On their return to St. Louis they settled into a bridal suite carved from the excess space of the Eliot home.[69]

---

[67] William G. Eliot to TLE, August 12, 1865, WGE.

[68] TLE, "Journal" (1865).

Tom's ministry in St. Louis had two distinct aspects. He was first of all his father's associate, and as such shared in all the facets of spiritual and social ministry that William Eliot had brought under his direction. To meet the demands upon his time, Tom organized his life around a comprehensive "general plan," as he called it, in which he assigned three days each week to the preparation of sermons and two to visiting. Within each day there were periods for thought and study, exercise and family responsibilities.[70]

Working in his father's shadow, however, soon began to create the problems he had feared, and small, seemingly unrelated incidents heightened his sensitivity to the relationship. From Buffalo, where the National Conference of Unitarian Churches was deciding to retain its avowedly Christian identity, Tom wrote to his father of how highly everyone was speaking of the name of William Eliot, and how he wished "never to demean the privilege" of bearing the Eliot name. While serving as his associate was certainly bringing advantages that another post might not, he could not help longing, he confessed, "for an experience such as yours in some way off point, where I may grow with the people." He had even mentioned Oregon as a potential field to some men at the conference, but they had rebuffed him with talk of "hardship and distance and self-sacrifice." He felt that his father might understand, however, that Oregon, or some other "way off point" might possibly be "the most selfish choice" he could make.[71]

---

[69] Wilbur, Eliot, 18-19. Carlton Staples, his predecessor as associate minister in St. Louis, had asked Tom to try to begin a new movement among the Unitarians of New Orleans. William Eliot endorsed the idea while wondering whether "Etta might object." The return trip north could have been tragic for the couple as the steamer on which they had originally been scheduled to travel blew up with a heavy loss of life.

[70] TLE, "General Plan," n.d.

The second aspect of his call was to serve as "minister-at-large" for small Unitarian outposts scattered throughout the Middle West. In this phase of his work Tom found both the satisfaction and independence he sought. For his first summer in the field he mapped out a preaching itinerary for Iowa, Kansas and Nebraska. Impatient to begin, he wrote to a brother minister that he was "under marching orders: go and preach the Gospel."[72]

---

[71] TLE to William G. Eliot, June 22, 1866. It was as a result of the affirmations that the Unitarians made at Buffalo that a number of radicals, pre-eminently Octavius Brooks Frothingham, withdrew to form the Free Religious Association in 1867. See Persons, Free Religion, esp. 18-54; Ralph Henry Gabriel, The Course of American Democratic Thought (New York, 1940), 183-196.

[72] TLE to Laird Collier, July 6, 1866.

Only his eyes were detaining him, he assured a worried Unitarian in Davenport on one occasion, but he would be along as soon as he could. "As soon as I get there," he promised, "I shall hire some hall, advertise, and fire without ceasing."[73]

Tom "fired" liberally during the hot summer of 1866 and found his missionary work generally "a pleasing one." He wrote to Etta how it filled him with a sense of purpose to "consecrate life and all its energies to make men devoted, simple Christians." There were hardships and discouragements, to be sure. The greatest hardship was the strain upon his eyes from the glaring sun. Discouragements came most often from the Unitarian label he wore. "Christians think me an infidel," he complained, "while infidels and spiritualists find me too Christian." There was some small consolation in the fact that his father had received the same ambiguous reception in St. Louis, but it was still hard to bear. The prospects of changing men's orientations, however, and of molding diverse liberal elements into a strong, harmonious organization was enough to make him disregard the hostility. What "nobler work" could he possibly be doing, he asked his wife.[74]

---

[73] TLE to "Ned," July 10, 1866.

Etta agreed that Tom was indeed engaged in a noble work, but sitting alone in St. Louis, darning his socks and brooding over her solitude, she also knew the lonely side of marriage to an itinerant missionary. "I wish for once," she wrote, "you could know how horrid it is to be a wife that has to be in the house so much and have your husband leave you."[75] Greater joys soon overshadowed Etta's trials, however, and on October 13, 1866, her husband's twenty-fifth birthday, she presented Tom with a son whom they christened William Greenleaf Eliot, Jr.

The fall of 1866 also brought a call from the Unitarian congregation in New Orleans that Tom had served briefly on his wedding trip. It was an opportunity for the independent ministry he wanted, and he carefully weighed all the factors involved--the urgency of the invitation, the precarious financial situation and instability of membership, their failure to find an acceptable preacher in the South and their antipathy to Yankee preachers from New England--and declined the call.[76]

---

[74] Compare C.C. Eliot, William G. Eliot, 21-22, where William Eliot, writing to James Freeman Clarke, complains of hostility from both right and left, and his own Notebook 4, April 2, 1855, WGE, where he refers to shabby treatment at the hands of the orthodox clergy of St. Louis. TLE to HRE, July 21, 1866.

[75] HRE to TLE, June 18, 1866.

Several times during the year that followed, Tom reconsidered the open invitation from New Orleans. He even undertook a trial ministry of several months there in the spring of 1867. Not only did he find the Unitarians of New Orleans a "queer people" and the "rebel hide very tough,"[77] Tom found his father unalterably opposed to his accepting the call. Admitting that his own motives were "mixed with selfishness," and that his son was undoubtedly correct in wishing to "put off the old man," William Eliot nevertheless asked Tom to disqualify New Orleans for what he considered an objectively valid reason: the people of the church there were not yet ready to allow their minister "to thoroughly feel and assert his freedom." William Eliot was emphatic: "It is no place for you!"[78]

Two additional opportunities soon came to Tom from opposite ends of the country, but both from a city named Portland. While he had been in Divinity School, Tom had preached to a pastorless congregation in Portland, Maine. Their former minister, Horatio Stebbins, had recently gone to San Francisco to succeed the late Starr King. The people had been pleased with Tom's sermons, and early in September 1867 they invited him to undertake a trial ministry of from three to six months. It was understood that a permanent call would follow if both minister and members were satisfied.[79] On the very same day he received through the American Unitarian Association a call from a small group of Unitarians in Portland, Oregon. Immediately upon receipt of the invitation to Oregon, Tom penned a letter of resignation to the trustees of the Church of the Messiah. He asked for a release a month before the expiration of his contract "for reasons of safety in travel" and the "arduousness of the journey" he expected to make.[80] The next day he noted in his journal that the matter of Portland, Oregon, was "settled."[81]

---

[76] J. Fellows to TLE, November 25, 1866.

[77] William G. Eliot to TLE, April 23, 1867; May 1, 1867, WGE.

[78] Ibid., May 27, 1867.

The matter was not completely settled in his mind, however, and as he traveled on his last missionary circuit out of St. Louis he wondered whether he had made a wise decision for himself and his family. On the one hand, the success of his efforts "among the injuns of Kansas" buoyed him up and supported his decision. He had attracted thirty-one persons to his services at Kansas City, including "some of the very best citizens." Liberal Christianity, he felt, could indeed take root in a frontier society, and he conveyed this sense of assurance to Etta: "My calmer judgment strengthens my purposes though I am pretty clear as to the sacrifices and trials. . . it involves. I think we shall see it one day as wisely done."[82] He worried, on the other hand, that Etta might not be able to endure the rigors of frontier life, that he had perhaps been too selfish in accepting a position that would fulfill his own needs while ignoring the comforts of his wife. He vowed to make compensation to her: "If your husband can fill your heart and be place and time out of place and time, he gladly will."[83]

---

[79] Mack P. Emery to TLE, September 2, 1867.

[80] TLE to the Trustees of the Church of the Messiah, September 6, 1867.

[81] TLE, "Journal" (1867), September 7, 1867.

Tom's parents regarded his departure for Oregon as variously a "sensation" and a "bereavement."[84] But Tom looked forward to his approaching adventure with exhilaration, and as a great liberalizing. "My whole life is already a different thing," he noted early in October.[85] Later in the month, Charles Lowe, secretary of the American Unitarian Association, urged him to leave immediately for Oregon, and Tom, Etta and "Willie" departed St. Louis on November 11, bound via Chicago for Boston and New York.[86] On November 21, 1867, at the firing of her signal gun, the Rising Star slipped her moorings, and Tom Eliot's decision to have a distinctive ministry of his own in a place of his own choosing had become irrevocable.

---

[82] TLE to HRE, September 13, 1867.

[83] Ibid., September 15, 1867.

[84] William Eliot to TLE, November 16, 1867, WGE. He wrote: "I have been too busy to feel our bereavement since your leaving, but it will come upon us fast enough when the month-old letters begin to arrive. Meanwhile we old folks will jog on and the young ones come up to take our places and the sun will rise and go down as before."

---

[85] TLE, "Journal" (1867), October 4, 1867.

[86] Charles Lowe to TLE, October 28, 1867.

CHAPTER II

THE GENESIS OF A MOVEMENT

> I affirm as conviction so deep that is invested
> for men with the unchangeableness of God himself;
> that Jesus Christ came as an exemplar of this
> highest life in man and dare believe that no one
> is a Christian, whatever the name, form or ceremony,
> who has not adopted this ideal for his life,
> that he will spend himself for others.
>
> Thomas Lamb Eliot,
> December 25, 1969

The voyage from New York to San Francisco was a nightmare of seasickness, especially for Etta. Eliot fought it off with frequent snatches of fresh air on deck, but his wife was too weak to leave the cabin, which was "orful." While Tom functioned as husband and father he had ample time to reflect on where each lurching, heaving movement of the Rising Star was taking him. "How changed! How solemn my new regeneration," he mused. The doubts and anxieties of his earlier voyage returned to haunt him, and once again he fought for genuine resignation to the will of God. "What I am of this day I give to God: rest indeed for my soul."[1]

---

[1] TLE, "Journal" (1867), November 21-23, 1867.

After the Isthmian passage, the Eliots continued their voyage on the Constitution. Once again, Etta was wretched. They arrived in San Francisco on Friday, December 13. During their layover of six days, Eliot preached for Horatio Stebbins, dined with his cousin, John Dawes, and visited the mint. On Sunday evening, he and Etta heard Stebbins deliver one of his popular theater sermons.[2]

Thursday evening, December 19, was "clear and lovely in every way," as the Montana left San Francisco. Some forty passengers, including several of Eliot's future parishioners, had little idea of the beating they were about to take. Eliot described the next four days as an unrelieved "misery, stench and consummate horror." The last day was worst of all as the Montana rode out a gale outside the bar of the Columbia River. At five in the evening, after the ship had finally crossed to wait the night at Baker's Bay, Etta appeared at shipboard supper for the first time. Monday morning they could "laugh over their miseries" as they proceeded past Astoria and up the Columbia, straining to see the "river scenery all under the Oregon mist." At two o'clock in the morning of

---

[2] Ibid., November 30-December 18, 1867; Charles A. Murdock, Horatio Stebbins: His Ministry and His Personality (Boston, 1921), 55-56.

Christmas Eve, the Montana eased to rest at a wharf on the Willamette. To reach the site of his future labors, the Pacific Northwest's first resident Unitarian minister had spent "forty days and forty nights in the bosom of the deep."[3]

Whatever his first impressions of Portland, Eliot had come prepared to find more than a crude frontier town. The letter from Charles Lowe inviting him to Oregon had lavishly praised Portland's climate, scenery, location and potential development as well as the high quality of its fledgling Unitarian Society. "I see no reason," Lowe had written, "why a society there should not be, in point of influence, for Oregon (which is larger than New England and is rapidly filling up) what San Francisco is for California, or St. Louis for the valley of the Mississippi."[4]

Eliot had also done some reading of his own on the subject of

---

[3] TLE, "Journal" (1867), December 19-24, 1867; TLE, "Notes for Appeal for Funds," 1879. Six months after Eliot had been in San Francisco, Stebbins wrote to William Greenleaf Eliot: "What a refreshing to my heart was the arrival of your son. . . . I was impressed with his wisdom, discretion, and fine religious sensibilities . . . . His success and great influence are a foregone conclusion, and all I hear from him and the people confirm my confident prediction." Horatio Stebbins to William Greenleaf Eliot, June 17, 1868.

[4] Charles Lowe to TLE, September 2, 1867, cited in Earl Morse Wilbur, A History of the First Unitarian Church of Portland, Oregon, 1867-1892 (Portland, 1893), 87.

Oregon, particularly in Samuel Bowles's popular travelogue, Across the Continent.[5] Bowles, proprietor of the Springfield (Massachusetts) Republican had spent enough time in Portland during his Western tour of 1865 to be impressed with its civic virtues, including its sabbatarian practices. In what may have been a kindly and over-enthusiastic generalization, he wrote that Portlanders "keep Sunday as we do in New England and as no other population this side of the Mississippi now does." He evaluated the community as a "prosperous, energetic town, with a good deal of eastern leadership and tone to business and society and morals." Superficially, at least, it seemed to Bowles that in comparison with their southern neighbors, Oregonians were building more wisely--if more slowly--a prosperous, healthy and moral society, and were on their way to making their state the "New England of the Pacific Coast."[6]

Eliot might have been even more optimistic had he been able to read an article about Portland that Judge Matthew P. Deady was writing for the first issue of Overland Monthly. "Portland is the mart of the Wallamet [sic] Valley, and such it ever has been and will be," the Judge began. In 1867 alone, he continued, exports from Portland had increased to five times the value of the previous year. The flour, fruit, hides, fish, wool and meat that had crossed Portland's docks were but the first fruits of virtually inexhaustible resources of land, water and forest. Moreover, railroad fever was in the air, and soon a web of land transportation would augment the river systems in gathering to Portland's waterfront the bounties that nature had bestowed. The traffic in gold, noticeably on the decline for several years, was dispensable.[7]

---

[5] Ibid. Lowe notes that Eliot had read Bowles's book.

[6] Samuel Bowles, Across the Continent: A Summer's Journey to the Rocky Mountains, the Mormons, and the Pacific States, with Speaker Colfax (Springfield, 1865), 182-183, 197.

Portland gave evidence of civilization as well as prosperity.

---

[7] Matthew P. Deady, "Portland-on-Wallamet," Overland Monthly, I (July 1868), 34-43. Recent interpreters might admonish the Judge for belittling the effects of gold mining in the rise of Portland's economy. Arthur L. Throckmorton, for example, suggests just how important gold from California was in building the investment capital that launched Oregon enterprises in river, ocean and railroad commerce, agriculture and industry, and brought Portland and the Willamette Valley to the verge of an economic "takeoff" at just about the time of Eliot's arrival. Arthur L. Throckmorton, Oregon Argonauts (Portland, 1961), vii-viii, 69, 87-106. Dorothy O. Johansen, "Capitalism on the Far-Western Frontier: The Oregon Steam Navigation Company" (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, University of Washington, 1941), 64, mentions the example of Robert R. Thompson, a Unitarian and pioneer of 1846, who struck it rich in the California mines and used the wealth to acquire river boats and portage rights on the Upper Columbia.

Among its 7,000 inhabitants was a considerable number of Yankees who, according to Deady, were skilled in both mercantile and mechanical pursuits. Many Portlanders were at least nominally religious; eleven churches of various popular denominations opened their doors to thousands of worshipers each week. Three public and five private schools were able to accommodate over two-thirds of the school-age children. The rotunda of an imposing courthouse, just recently completed, dominated the landscape, and from its observation deck 155 feet above the streets (two of which were paved), proud residents could survey not only the impressive natural beauty of the site but also the row of new wharves and warehouses extending along the Willamette. Even with deficiencies in its fire department, utilities and theatrical offerings ("a low grade of minstrels and vulgar comedy") the youthful city was already an attractive place to live. A prosperous and stable future, Deady ventured, seemed assured; though Portland would probably remain "comparatively a provincial place and noted for peculiarities in manners, opinions and business, . . . it will be worth more dollars per head than either London or New York, and its good citizens will sleep sounder and live longer than the San Franciscans."[8] While

---

[8] Deady, "Portland-on-Wallamet," 34-43.

New England blood certainly carried no guarantee of prosperity, and while Yankee merchants possessed no monopoly of sound business practices in Oregon or elsewhere, it was indisputably true that a large proportion of Portland's successful pioneer entrepreneurs were of New England origin. The prominence of Captain John Couch, Henry Winslow Corbett and Simeon Reed of Massachusetts, Cyrus Reed of New Hampshire and William S. Ladd of Vermont attests to the pre-eminence of Yankees in Portland's earliest economic affairs. It was a group "highly effective" for its size.[9] On the other hand, New Englanders were not the only Portlanders with talent or money. Captain John Ainsworth and Robert R. Thompson, who with Simeon Reed comprised the "triumvirate" of the Oregon Steam Navigation Company and the future financial core of Eliot's Society, were natives of Ohio; and Judge Deady, himself a native of Maryland, worried about the ubiquity of Jews in the economic life of Portland. "How long," he asked in 1868, "will the cultivated American of Yankee descent, with his maximum family of one delicate child, successfully compete with this healthy and fruitful people for the lead and mastery in commerce and business?"[10] By 1867, Portland, in the conduct of its business as in its architectural styles, belied caricatures of the typical frontier settlement. Prudent businessmen, from New England as well as from the Midwest and San Francisco, Yankees as well as Jews, had helped the city achieve an almost instant maturity.[11]

---

[9] Stewart Holbrook, The Yankee Exodus (New York, 1950), 229.

Eliot had reason to believe that Portland was as religious as it was prosperous, that the successful establishment of major Protestant denominations by 1867 augered as well for its growth in spirituality as the residence of Yankee merchants had seemed to guarantee the accumulation of riches. Methodists (1848), Congregationalists (1849) and Episcopalians (1851) had had little difficulty in organizing stable congregations, while Presbyterians (1860) and Baptists (1867) had encountered problems attributable to lack of ministerial supply. As soon as they obtained a resident minister and completed a church (1864), the Presbyterians experienced rapid growth. The membership of a number of

---

[10] Deady, "Portland-on-Wallamet," 40.

[11] For the role of Yankee merchants in endowing Portland with an aura of conservatism and respectability, see Earl Pomeroy, The Pacific Slope (New York, 1965), 135-139.

Portland's "merchant princes," such as Captains Ainsworth and Couch, William S. Ladd and Henry Corbett, helped to make First Presbyterian Church "Portland's most fashionable congregation."[12]

The year of Eliot's arrival was a banner year for the Protestant congregations of Portland. George Henry Atkinson, pastor of the First Congregational Church, reported to the American Home Missionary Society in June of 1867 that all of the evangelical groups had experienced "unusually large accessions of late," with "little or no attempt to proselytize converts." He attributed the revival of religious interest to a series of daily noon prayer meetings that the evangelical churches of the city had jointly arranged to accomplish "the complete redemption of the city to Christ." The Presbyterians and Baptists each reported between twenty and twenty-five new members, the Methodists between sixty and seventy, and his own Congregational Church, thirty-three. Even the Episcopalians, "whose ministers had not engaged with [the] union efforts," received twenty new members as a result of the meetings.[13]

---

[12] Harvey W. Scott, History of Portland, Oregon (Syracuse, 1890), 344-359; History and Directory of the First Presbyterian Church, Portland, Oregon (Portland, 1889), 20; Throckmorton, Argonauts, 314. There were also Roman Catholic and Jewish organizations.

What of the Unitarians? How did Eliot's new charge fit into Portland's religious profile? Even though all the popular denominations seemed to be represented and flourishing by the mid-1860s, there were some members of Portland's Protestant community who did not feel comfortable in the existing churches. Thomas Frazar, for example, because of his dissatisfaction with orthodox doctrine, preferred to worship in his home rather than in any of the evangelical churches of the city. He and his wife, Mary, enjoyed gathering with neighbors and friends to pray, sing hymns and read sermons of Channing, Peabody and other liberal thinkers. Other liberals had continued to attend and support the various evangelical churches until one of the ministers vehemently attacked the principles of Unitarianism from his pulpit. The disenchanted soon withdrew and laid plans for an independent church. Mary Frazar and six other women, "friends of liberal Christianity," they called themselves, led the way. In December 1865, they formed what became the "Ladies Sewing Society," a multi-purpose social, spiritual and fund-raising association to "promote and advance the cause."[14]

---

[13] George Henry Atkinson to the American Home Missionary Society, June 3, 1867, A. H. M. S. Correspondence, Chicago Theological Seminary, Microfilms, University of Oregon Special Collections.

The cause received little denominational attention or support before 1867. The only Unitarian preachers known to have visited Portland before that year were Thomas Starr King and Horatio Stebbins. Each was, at the time of his visit, pastor of the First Unitarian Society of San Francisco, the only Unitarian congregation on the Pacific Coast. The visits of both King and Stebbins focused considerable public attention upon Unitarianism.

King appeared in Portland in 1862 on a lecture tour to raise money for the United States Sanitary Commission. Traveling north by overland stage, he stopped to speak in towns along his route. Published reactions to his presentations varied directly with the political leanings of the local papers, and "Copperhead" papers were particularly vigorous in denouncing him. The Sonora Union Democrat, for example, labeled King a "charlatan, hypocrite and double-distilled humbug. . . still repeating his threadbare lecture on patriotism. . . a fair representative of the rabid, fanatical, godless Boston school of political preachers."[15] Joaquin Miller, writing in the Eugene Democratic Register, castigated "noble, self-denying, patriotic Starr King" for "charging only fifty cents a head for firing men's hearts by his finished address and well-turned falsehoods against their brothers and neighbors who may differ with them in politics."[16]

---

[14] Wilbur, History of the First Unitarian Church, 5-7. Frazar, United States Assessor in Portland, had come to Oregon from Duxbury, Massachusetts, in 1851. Scott, Portland, 115.

A large audience gathered in the Taylor Street Methodist Church of Portland on Sunday evening, July 27, to hear King's address on "The Nation to Arise from the War." The Oregonian, at least, received him cordially and adjudged his lecture "a master effort, powerful and conclusive." The speaker had not only mustered evidence "to command the undivided attention of the entire audience," it claimed, he had also "irresistibly forced the conviction that the American nation would come out of the. . . struggle refined, purified and exalted to a much higher, solid and magnified destiny."[17]

---

[15] Cited in Arnold Crompton, Unitarianism on the Pacific Coast: The First Sixty Years (Boston, 1957), 39.

[16] Cited in William Greenleaf Eliot, Jr., "Thomas Starr King in Oregon, 1862," Oregon Historical Quarterly, XXXII (June 1931), 107.

[17] Portland Oregonian, July 29, 1862.

One member of King's audience dissented vigorously from the Republican paper's flattering appraisal. Judge Deady, Portland correspondent for the San Francisco Daily Evening Bulletin and a not wholly reconstructed Breckenridge Democrat, thought King neither "handsome nor striking in his personal appearance"; in his ministerial demeanor, he continued, he was "no more a monk than Rabelais." Not only was King's presentation more fitting for the stage than the pulpit, he failed to conceal his Yankee origins to Deady's satisfaction. "One is not long in finding out. . . that he hails from Boston, and with the 'Little Gentleman' in Holmes's Breakfast Table believes that 'heretic old city' to be the 'Hub of the Universe!' Maybe it is."[18] However his audience received it, King had tailored his address to arouse the ardor of Unionists rather than Unitarians, and no liberal religious organization resulted directly from his appearance.

---

[18] Cited in William G. Eliot, Jr., "Starr King in Oregon," 108-109. King raised over $700 in Portland for the coffers of the United States Sanitary Commission. An interesting sidelight to King's prodigious financial contributions to the Union cause was the dispute over disposition of the funds he raised. The disputants in an epistolary war that caught King in the middle were Henry Whitney Bellows, Unitarian president of the United States Sanitary Commission and William Greenleaf Eliot, of the Western Sanitary Commission. Each presented his own agency as the proper authority for Union army relief in the Mississippi Valley. Eliot claimed the two groups were parallel regional agencies while Bellows claimed Eliot's work was divisive. King, caught between the "upper and nether millstones," eventually assigned all his funds to the United States Sanitary Commission, but it hurt him to turn down "so good a man as Eliot." Russell M. Posner, "Thomas Starr King and the Mercy Million," California Historical Society Quarterly, XLIII (December 1964), 299-301. On the views of Deady and other Oregon Democrats during this period see Robert W. Johannsen, Frontier Politics on the Eve of the Civil War (Seattle, 1955), esp. 197-219.

A more direct impulse toward the formation of a Unitarian congregation came from the visit of Horatio Stebbins, King's successor in San Francisco. In December 1865, the Ladies Sewing Society sent Stebbins thirty dollars with which to purchase a communion service for them, and the following month they invited him to visit Portland to determine whether there was "enough strength to warrant organizing a liberal church."[19] Stebbins came early in April and preached three times on Sunday, April 8, in the vestry of the Baptist church. The reputation of the speaker drew "full congregations which increased largely on each succeeding occasion," the Oregonian reported, "and they were not disappointed." Stebbins's sermons "were of a practical character, distinguished by great breadth of thought as well as a knowledge of life that left no doubt that the speaker had made a close and successful study of the springs of human action."[20] His message was of the kind that the liberal Christians of Portland had been waiting to hear, and they found in it fulfillment for a "spiritual want which the doctrines promulgated by the other denominations could not satisfy."[21] Even Judge Deady was mildly complimentary as he compared Stebbins with Starr King. Though he supposed that both Unitarians as "representatives on this coast of Boston theology and philosophy," were "substantially alike," he definitely preferred the "idea of country freshness, purity and modesty" that hovered about Stebbins to the "florid and pretentious" style of King.[22]

---

[19] "First Unitarian Society of Portland, Oregon, Record Book, Being a Complete History of the Society from its Beginning on the First Day of May, 1866," First Unitarian Society (hereinafter, FUS) Archives, Portland, Oregon, 1.

At a social gathering following his last service, Stebbins encouraged the formulation of plans for a liberal religious society. Those who were present subscribed $1,175 toward a lot for a chapel and $800 toward a minister's salary. An executive committee of five assumed the direction of the movement; in addition to Thomas Frazar the group included Charles W. Burrage, a civil engineer originally from Leominster, Massachusetts; James W. Cook, a bag manufacturer, Robert R. Thompson, a director of the Oregon

---

[20] Oregonian, April 9, 1866.

[21] FUS, "Record Book," 4.

[22] William G. Eliot, Jr., "Starr King in Oregon," 112.

Steam Navigation Company, and Circuit Judge Erasmus D. Shattuck.[23]

On April 25, Stebbins left Portland with the confidence that the "liberal friends of Christianity were fully warranted in organizing and inviting a minister."[24] He was barely gone when the Methodist Pacific Christian Advocate commenced its harassment of the Unitarians that was later to plague Eliot. Without naming Stebbins, the editor denounced "Liberal Christianity" and its "eloquent expounder" for denying doctrines vital to the salvation of perishing sinners. "The reader will do well to examine the foundation on which 'Liberal Christianity' rests," the Advocate warned. "In what consists its power to renew and save the soul? Can it save?"[25]

Portland's liberals were daunted neither by Methodist criticism nor by Stebbins's failure to secure them a minister immediately. By the time they heard that Stebbins's first choice for their pulpit, Rev. Eli Fay of Woburn, Massachusetts, had declined the invitation, they had already arranged for the collection of subscriptions, the purchase of a lot and the drafting of a constitution. On June 26, 1866, twenty-four persons signed an instrument of church government patterned closely after that of the Unitarian congregation in San Francisco. They selected the name, "First Unitarian Society of Portland, Oregon," and stated that as the objects of their fellowship they intended "to promote the object of public worship; the Christian faith; the Ordinances of the Gospel; Religious education; General Benevolence; Charity, and Christian Toleration." Most of the document detailed the congregational polity of the society: at the annual meeting (the second Tuesday of January), all eligible members (those holding a pew or contributing to the funds of the society) would elect from their own body nine trustees in whose hands the business affairs of the congregation would rest for the ensuing year.[26]

---

[23] FUS "Record Book," 1; S. J. McCormick, editor, Portland City Directory (Portland, 1866).

[24] FUS, "Record Book," 1-2.

[25] Pacific Christian Advocate, April 28, 1866.

Four days after endorsing their constitution, the voting members gathered to elect the first group of trustees. They selected all five members of the temporary committee and W. F. Wilcox, a cabinet maker, James M. Gilman, an engineer, Ira Goodnough, a contractor and R. A. White. Apart from the trustees, the roster of original voting members included several merchants, an architect, a watchman, a photographer, a clerk, a deputy sheriff and three male members of a rather exceptional family of farmers, the Dufurs. Collectively, the initial membership of the First Unitarian Society represented a fairly broad range of Portland's middle and upper-middle class in 1866. There was a definite preponderance of the "white-collar" element from the beginning. The new Society received its articles of incorporation on July 9, 1866, and its members continued to await the arrival of a minister to lead them.[27]

---

[26] Wilbur, History, 11-12; FUS "Record Book," 4-11.

Over a year passed without a minister. After Fay declined, Stebbins negotiated with a certain Mr. Young who gave false hopes to the Society with an acceptance which he later withdrew. By January 1867, the trustees were urging Stebbins to use the telegraph, if necessary, "to procure. . . a minister as speedily as possible." In August 1867, construction of a chapel began on a lot the Society had purchased for $2,000 from Henry Corbett. A modest edifice costing $2,200, it was fifty feet wide by sixty feet long and furnished with plain wooden benches seating 200 persons. By the time Charles

---

[27] Wilbur, History, 77-87; FUS "Record Book," 11-16; McCormick, Portland Directory (1866).

Lowe notified the Society that Thomas Lamb Eliot had accepted its call, the members were confident that a house of worship would be ready for him.[28]

Thomas Frazar met the Eliots at the Montana at seven o'clock in the morning of a dark and rainy day and conveyed them by rented hack to his home. There they were to lodge until their own possessions, en route around the Horn, caught up with them in the spring. It was not an easy day for the Eliots; Willie was sick, and Eliot could not help wondering whether they were being missed at home. But the Frazars provided a hearty welcome, and after resting during the morning Eliot called on eight of his new parishioners. In the evening, he read "Snowbound" before a glowing fire and fell into a "death-like nap."[29] The next morning, the Christmas edition of the Oregonian carried an invitation "to all friends interested in liberal Christianity" to attend a social that evening in honor of the new pastor of the Unitarian Society, "Rev. T.J. Elliott" [sic].[30]

Though Eliot preached for the first time the following Sunday morning, the first important function of his ministry was the service of dedication for the new chapel. A capacity congregation "of all denominations and classes" turned out on Sunday afternoon, December 29, to see whether the performance of the youthful preacher justified his "reputation of having a good deal of talent and fine scholarly attainments." One listener evidently thought it did. "Eliot's appeals," he reported, were "often eloquent, . . . addressed to the heart rather than the head." His unaffected style and natural manner also were quietly impressive: "talking gently, and with almost child-like simplicity. . . he won the hearts of not only his own people, but of those in whom we might naturally look for some prejudice and bigotry." Everyone he had encountered, even those who had attended simply out of curiosity, to hear a new preacher, seemed pleased "both with the oratory which claimed their attention and the liberal spirit which breathed in every sentence of the sermon." The Unitarian Society, he felt, had certainly been fortunate in its selection of a pastor. Considering the brief span of its formal existence and the "handful of members" with which the Society had begun, its progress since Stebbins's visit appeared remarkable and its membership "comparatively numerous." From casual observation, he was ready to predict that with Thomas Eliot in its pulpit, the First Unitarian Society would soon take "fair rank among churches of much older growth."[31]

---

[28] Wilbur, History, 12-13; FUS "Record Book," 17-22.

[29] TLE, "Journal" (1867) December 24, 1867.

[30] Oregonian, December 25, 1867.

An important aspect of the dedication service was the participation of three of Portland's evangelical clergymen. Carrol C. Stratton, minister at the Taylor Street Methodist Church, delivered the invocation. Edward C. Anderson, who had recently come to the pulpit of the First Baptist Church from a teaching position in Kalamazoo, Michigan, read the scripture. O.G. Harpending, an itinerant Presbyterian, offered the closing prayer. The presence of three orthodox ministers at the festivities of a heterodox rival seemed auspicious. Whether they gave approbation to "the liberal spirit which breathed in every sentence of the sermon" was not discernible. Of Mr. Anderson, however, who called upon him the following day, Eliot noted, "he [is] a true liberal."[32]

One evangelical minister was as conspicuous by his absence as his colleagues were by their presence. Of all the ministers in Portland on the last Sunday of 1867, George Henry Atkinson, pastor of the First Congregational Church, had most in common with Thomas

---

[31] Ibid., December 31, 1867. Eliot himself regarded the dedication as "a great success." TLE, "Journal" (1867), December 29, 1867.

[32] TLE, "Journal" (1867) December 30, 1867.

Lamb Eliot. A native of Newburyport, Massachusetts, he, like Eliot, was proud of his New England heritage and desirous of "planting. . . Puritan ideas and institutions among the people of Oregon."[33] Deeply committed to the causes of public education, temperance, prison reform, political morality, Indian welfare and the economic growth of the Pacific Northwest, Atkinson had every good reason to welcome Eliot as a clerical partner in a host of common tasks. This he could not do, and it was not just a matter of differences in age and temperament. He called upon Eliot to welcome him "as a citizen and neighbor" but as a "matter of conscience" found himself "unable to give him any recognition as a Christian minister" by participating in the dedicatory service.[34] He summarized his scruples, as well as his impressions of Eliot's Society, several months later in a letter to his uncle, Josiah Hale:

> A Unitarian church has been established here lately. It draws quite a crowd of the rich, of the looser sort of livers, with some very good moral people. The minister leans to the evangelical side of the two parties, I am told. His wife was formerly a Congregational member from St. Louis, Dr. Post's church. Some Massachusetts

---

[33] Nancy Bates Atkinson, Biography of Rev. George Henry Atkinson, D.D. (Portland, 1893), 18.

[34] Wilbur, Eliot, 26.

> Unitarians form the working central force of the church or society. It is antagonistic to orthodoxy. The other ministers assisted in the dedication of their house of worship--but I could not do so consistently. 2 Jo. 8:11th verses. I suppose the finger is pointed at me as a narrow, bigoted person. But it seems a small cross compared with the evil of denying our Lord.[35]

George Atkinson's refusal to recognize Thomas Lamb Eliot as a Christian minister was the conviction of a private conscience. The official organ of the Methodist Church in Oregon, however, wasted little time resurrecting criticisms it had once leveled at Stebbins. Assaulting liberal Christianity as a "spurious article," the Pacific Christian Advocate indicted Unitarianism for substituting philosophy ("falsely so-called") for evangelical faith "while the garb of Christianity is not laid aside." Liberals, the Advocate claimed, undermined religious foundations by removing "every pillar of truth on which Christ's edifice is erected" and by inserting in their place the "works of men," of which it cited education, external morality and deeds of charity as examples. "All that is vital is gone," the writer lamented; "a spurious bill that closely resembles is 100 times more dangerous than a base counterfeit." The closing words of the Advocate's strictures were strongly reminiscent of Atkinson's sentiments:

---

[35] George Atkinson to Josiah Hale, March 28, 1868, cited in E. M. Wilbur and Evadne Hilands, A Time to Build: The First Unitarian Society of Portland, Oregon 1866-1966 (Portland, 1966), 139-140.

> Evangelical Christians are sometimes charged with bigotry because they will not recognize as fellow Christians those who deny cardinal truths. But the charge is unjust. The hand of Christian fellowship cannot be extended to one who rejects the Atonement of Christ.[36]

Paying no public heed to these criticisms, Eliot set immediately to work to meet the pressing demands of his new parish. Among the most significant achievements of Eliot's first months in Portland was the creation of a Unitarian "church" as distinct from the "Society." Although parallel in structure and with a largely identical membership, each organization had a difference focus. The Society was primarily a business organization which one joined by signing the constitution and pledging an offering. The church was the "Body of Communicants of the First Unitarian Society" with whom one united by signing the "Articles of Agreement and Church Covenant." The covenant, of the same form as that in use in the Second Church in Boston for over 220 years--and consequently a

---

[36] Pacific Christian Advocate, January 18, 1868.

Congregational rather than Unitarian document--was extremely conservative in its phraseology:

> You do, in this solemn presence, give up yourself to the true God in Jesus Christ, and to his people also, according to the will of God, promising to walk with God, and with this Church of his, in all his holy ordinances, and to yield obedience to every truth of his, which has been or shall be made known to you as your duty, the Lord assisting you by his Spirit and grace.
>
> We, then, the Church of Christ in this place, do receive you into the fellowship, and promise to walk toward you, and watch over you, as a member of this Church, endeavoring your spiritual edification in Christ Jesus our Lord.[37]

With this statement of faith George Atkinson could have had no quarrel.

Eliot devoted much time during his first years especially to parish visitations and sermon preparation. His journals indicate that he spent a substantial part of almost every day calling upon members and friends of the parish.[38] His two sermons each Sunday covered a wide range of topics, and Eliot himself best summarized their tenor at the close of his second year in Portland. "I have reached," he said

---

[37] Cited in Wilbur, History, 90-91. Hilands, in A Time to Build, 121-124, interprets the use of this covenant as a mark of conservatism in pastor and congregation, from which there was a gradual departure during the course of the nineteenth century.

[38] TLE, "Journals" (1868-1869).

> of the worth of the soul and the majesty of human nature. I have pictured to you its mighty outlook and responsibilities, . . . its possibilities here and in the future of exalted affection, large and gracious knowledge and attitudes of royalty. . . . I have preached of nature . . . . I have preached of the . . . Holy Spirit in his peculiar relations to the soul, . . . his infinite personality and personal relation to each one of human kind. . . . In this conviction of a personal God, and the relation of each individual soul to him, has seemed to me to reside the foundation of religion. . . . I have preached Christ (not from creeds or counsels of men)--the Life of Jesus and his cross, the emblem of suffering love. . . . By the fact that all our preaching centers here, we are a Christian Church.[39]

The claim that his congregation was a "Christian Church" was the great theme of this and many another sermon delivered from Eliot's pulpit. It was this conviction, more than any other, that Eliot wished Atkinson, the Advocate and the remainder of Portland's religious community to understand and accept as a sincere profession of Unitarian faith as believed and practiced by his Society. And yet, grant him what they might as an ally in reform, education and the building of institutions, many of his clerical colleagues persisted for years in their refusal to bestow the acknowledgment that Eliot most desired. The pursuit of acceptance, consequently, became one of the driving forces of Eliot's parish ministry and, almost more than any other, the dominant theme of his early years in Oregon.

---

[39] TLE, "Prospect and Retrospect," December 25, 1869.

CHAPTER III

THE QUEST FOR STATUS

> And if our beliefs have more enlightenment and
> commend themselves to the reason of men while
> they satisfy the yearnings of the soul, let them spread.
> Let them leaven other churches.
>
> Thomas Lamb Eliot,
> February 28, 1869

While the burden of opposition from the evangelical camp pressed continually upon Eliot during his first decade in Portland, two public controversies during the period underscored both the theological issues and the emotional gulf separating liberals and conservatives. The first debate, in 1869, was over the issue of eternal retribution; the second, in 1874, concerned Eliot's proposed membership in the Y. M. C. A. Eliot's campaign for a new church building, completed in 1879, was in some respects his personal response to the issue underlying both debates: the relation of the Unitarians to Portland's religious community.

During 1868, Eliot became increasingly disappointed at the relatively small number of outsiders interested and determined enough to negotiate the muddy roads leading to the Unitarian chapel on the western edge of Portland. Many residents, he knew, were alienated from the orthodox churches, and likely prospects for affiliation with a liberal church if he could reach them. To attract their attention he resolved upon a series of well publicized services to be held in a theater in the center of town. On his way through San Francisco the year before he had attended just such a Unitarian service in a downtown theater where Horatio Stebbins was preaching to large and enthusiastic audiences. Late in 1868 Eliot wrote Stebbins for advice about the experiment. Stebbins encouraged the project, urging Eliot to keep his sermons short and somewhat informal with an abundance of illustrations.[1]

The prospects of reaching a wider audience excited Eliot as the day of his first public service approached; he had "theatre on the brain night and day" and was "writing vehemently."[2] On Sunday evening, January 10, 1869, the Oro Fino Theater was filled with what a satisfied and relieved Eliot termed "a good house."[3]

---

[1] Stebbins to TLE, December 5, 1868. The success of Stebbins's own theater preaching was more apparent than real, his biographer asserts. While there was an initial surge of interest, attendance declined as the novelty wore off, and those who attended "showed no disposition to graduate into the church. We considered it not worth the cost and trouble." Charles A. Murdock, Horatio Stebbins, 55-56.

[2] TLE, "Journal" (1869), January 8, 1869.

[3] Ibid., January 10, 1869.

The service was simple--hymns, prayers, the reading of Scripture and the sermon. His first sermon, "The Choice of Hercules," was well received--as were his subsequent efforts, "The Buried Talent" and "Practical Atheism." Eliot was jubilant; he seemed finally to be reaching large numbers of the uncertain and the uncommitted. Even the *Advocate* seemed to appreciate what he was attempting and expressed the hope that his services would lead to such a "powerful revival of true religion" that it would be necessary "to hold meetings there every night in the week." As if seeking precedents to justify its endorsement, the *Advocate* noted that Peter Cartwright had conducted one of his revivals at a ballroom where he preached a powerful sermon to "those who came to dance, but stayed to pray"; that William Taylor of California "preached some of his best sermons in saloons, on whiskey barrels and behind billiard tables"; and that Dr. A. Clarke expressed a willingness to "preach the Gospel anywhere out of hell, so that he could but save souls." We shall be glad, the *Advocate* concluded, "to hear of revivals anywhere."[4] However Eliot appreciated being numbered among the revivalists, he could not have helped but regard the favorable response as an omen of success and acceptance. He wrote to Stebbins of his triumph, and Stebbins replied that he was "gratified exceedingly with your complete moral success."[5] It did not last long.

---

[4] *Pacific Christian Advocate*, January 16, 1869.

In his fourth theater sermon on January 31, "God All in All," Eliot seriously questioned orthodox beliefs about everlasting punishment, and there was an instant, angry reaction. The Advocate nearly stumbled over itself trying to withdraw its earlier endorsement. Far from being a revival of religion, Eliot's services suddenly seemed to rival the "hurdy-gurdy" performances as "deleterious influences" undermining the moral foundations of Portland. The smallpox, the Advocate declared, had spared the city for a worse plague; or was it a conspiracy?

> Failing to get an expression of approval from evangelical ministers in behalf of the theater, the parties concerned have secured the advocacy of a liberal Christianity; one broad enough in all respects to suit the most depraved. Here the doctrine of no-hell is preached to the satisfaction of saloon frequenters and men of loose morals, who nudge each other in the audience and chuckle over the attacks on evangelical religion, while the quiet respectability of the

---

[5] Stebbins to TLE, February 20, 1869. Stebbins warned Eliot not to let his successes in the theater "diminish [his] interest in the church."

> services attracts the dilettanti who eagerly swallow the gilded poison.[6]

On the day the Advocate's criticism appeared, the Rev. Edward C. Anderson, pastor of the First Baptist Church, called on Eliot to voice his disagreement in person. The two ministers spent a good deal of time that day "confabing on everlasting punishment."[7] At the conclusion of their discussion, Anderson asked Eliot for permission to deliver a public rebuttal on the controverted doctrine, and Eliot consented to let him do so at the Oro Fino on Sunday evening, February 14.

The following evening, February 7, Anderson warmed up for his assignment by delivering "an able sermon in reply to Rev. Mr. Eliot" at a union service at the Methodist Church, while a few blocks away at the Oro Fino, Eliot stepped forward at the conclusion of his own service and announced:

> The Rev. Mr. Anderson of the Baptist Church was present last Sunday night at these services and desires

---

[6] Pacific Christian Advocate, February 6, 1869. The article was signed "W," which could have denoted any of three Methodist ministers who served on the editorial board: J. H. Wilbur, J. H. Wythe and A. F. Waller. For the idea that Unitarians and Universalists were recipients of evangelical hostility, see Charles C. Cole, Jr., The Social Ideas of the Northern Evangelists (New York, 1954), 235.

[7] TLE, "Journal" (1869), February 6, 1869.

> to make some strictures upon what was said in my sermon. I have offered him my next Sunday evening for this purpose--that we may give the other side a hearing. I accede to Mr. Anderson's wish the more willingly as there has been some uncharitableness and injustices shown towards us in our work for the truth as it is in Jesus in this place. . . . It will be our happiness therefore to listen to Mr. Anderson, extending him the full courtesy and hospitality of our household of faith--and pray God he may speak honestly with fear, favor and hope of reward.[8]

The Advocate's challenge, meanwhile, required a reply, and Eliot penned an answer that was at once courteous and indignant. The charge of "collusion" between liberal Christians and theater interests, Eliot declared, was a complete "misrepresentation." The sponsoring congregation had publicly advertised its reasons for using the theater, namely the inaccessibility of the church and the desire to reach the unchurched. Moreover, Eliot charged, the Advocate's writer had "criticized what he did not hear," and had, in consequence, wrongly labeled Eliot's views on retribution as a "no-hell doctrine." And while his ideas were indeed broad, Eliot conceded, they were hardly likely to "suit the most depraved." Professing his love for the Methodist Church, and granting that the writer was undoubtedly "an earnest man of God," Eliot regretted that the writer's zeal was "not according to knowledge," and that he had attacked not a minister or a congregation so much as "the faith we love."[9]

---

[8] Pacific Christian Advocate, February 9, 1869; TLE, notes for "Notice of Mr. Anderson's Oro Fino Address."

Public opinion began to polarize. Upon reading his minister's reply to the Advocate, Judge Erasmus Shattuck was moved to express himself pointedly to Eliot. He regretted, he said, that Eliot had allowed himself to be caught up in a newspaper controversy, especially "in the organ of the 'Evangelical' adversaries," since the religious press rivaled its secular counterparts as "vehicles of misrepresentation and falsehood." Nor were ministers more reliable than other editors: "Evangelically holy men will lie for God," Shattuck complained. Commending Eliot for his masterly combination of "firmness, independence, charity and forebearance" in his reply, he pledged his support and hoped that Eliot would reap no further harvest of "Evangelical Charity."[10]

Eliot's antagonist, meanwhile, prepared for his role as defender of the faith. Edward Coffin Anderson was eminently qualified to speak clearly and competently for the evangelical side. Well-educated and articulate, he had earned a reputation as a competent teacher and classical scholar as well as a preacher who prepared each sermon with meticulous care. The American Baptist Home Missionary Society had sent Anderson from his teaching position at Kalamazoo College to revive the floundering Baptist congregation in Portland. In Oregon, he had spoken strongly against the farmer-preacher system the Baptists employed in the state, and in behalf of various humanitarian causes and missionary work among the Chinese.[11]

---

[9] Pacific Christian Advocate, February 13, 1869.

[10] Erasmus D. Shattuck to TLE, February 14, 1869.

Anderson and Eliot had at first been on cordial terms. Eliot had called on Anderson to invite him to participate in the dedication of his chapel, which he did. Anderson returned the call the day after the service, and as a result of their conversations Eliot came to regard the Baptist as "a true liberal." There were other meetings and other discussions between the two, and one of them had included a sharp debate on the subject of everlasting punishment.[12]

---

[11] See Albert W. Wardin, "The Baptists in Oregon" (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Oregon, 1967), 70, 137, 145; C.H. Mattoon, Baptist Annals of Oregon (McMinnville, 1905), 182. Later, as president of McMinnville College (1881-87), Anderson crusaded for an educated ministry: "Few impressions are more unfortunate for intelligent youth," he said, "than that religion is associated with ignorance." Wardin, 137.

What had begun as a friendly dialogue erupted as Portland's most heated theological controversy when Edward Anderson moved to the rostrum of the Oro Fino to make his case for orthodoxy. The topic of his address, "The Philistines Be Upon Thee, Sampson," suggested his attitude, and the reaction of the partisan audience confirmed it. "The town is all agog with Mr. Anderson's sermon which is considered entirely too personal," Eliot noted. Some of Eliot's members were less restrained at what they regarded as an affront to their faith, their minister and themselves. Eliot described Mary Frazar and Sarah Goodnough, two of the prominent women of his congregation, as "warhorses."[13]

Nor were the evangelicals ready to let the fire burn out. The Advocate's apologist felt it was necessary to reply to Eliot's reply to him, and the columns of the paper extended the debate for another round. Vigorously denying that he had misrepresented Eliot's views, slandered the faith of the Unitarian Society, or used the word

---

[12] TLE, "Journal" (1867), December 28 and 30, 1867; TLE, "Journal" (1868), April 7, 1868.

[13] TLE, "Journal" (1869), February 14 and 16, 1869.

"collusion," the writer refused to back down. Notes taken at the Oro Fino as well as the "memory of judicious persons" had clearly demonstrated that Eliot's position on retribution was nothing but "a repetition of the old Universalist arguments against future punishment" and a novel way, he thought, "to advocate a 'terrible retribution for sin.'" He also implied that he doubted the sincerity of Eliot's profession of love for Methodism.[14]

Although Eliot by this time was tired of both "retribution" and the controversy, he resolved upon a second sermon on the subject as a possible means of depersonalizing the issue. Referring to Anderson as his "friend and brother," Eliot asked his own supporters to regard the Baptist with charity and understanding. "I call upon you, once for all," he urged, "to lay aside the spirit of resentfulness which it has given me pain to see is being cherished by many against the speaker for what might be considered perhaps a lack of good taste in his methods of criticizing and presenting arguments." He hoped that all his friends would share his own feelings and "exonerate [Anderson] entirely of any willful intention to wound or exasperate." Nor should Unitarians fancy themselves as martyrs because of the assault on their faith; for such a posture, Eliot suggested, was "hardly needed in behalf of opinions and of a denomination whose dignity, scholarship and Christianity are established."

---

[14] Pacific Christian Advocate, February 20, 1869. The writer never did identify himself publicly.

On the substance of the disagreement between himself and Anderson, Eliot stressed two points. Reaffirming his earlier statements on retribution, he stressed particularly the idea that eternal suffering was inconsistent with the love and purposes of God which Jesus had revealed in the New Testament. Furthermore, he argued that Anderson, by denying literal belief in hell as a place of physical torment, had himself forsaken the orthodoxy he claimed to defend. Since Eliot's purpose was not to belabor the issues but to heal wounds and plead for tolerance, he soon returned to the controversy itself:

> This controversy, if it may be called such, has not been sought on our part. I take you to witness that whatever. . . just resentments may have besieged my thought and pleaded for utterance when my faith has been denounced, my motives impugned, and the prejudices of good men excited by calling our life in Christ a dangerous counterfeit, have been restrained. I have not given them place, for they are a part of human weakness which like an entering wedge will soon split a man's reason and temper into fragments: and only open the gaping wounds which cry for healing oil and wine. For the rest, as a minister of Christ, and as a Christian church, we are engaged in the great work of

> salvation. They who have felt the love of God, who have stood beneath the shadow of the cross, who have tasted Heaven here, cannot keep the precious treasure to themselves. And if our beliefs have more enlightenment, and commend themselves to the reason of men while they satisfy the yearnings of the soul, let them spread. Let them leaven other churches. Men do not put a candle under a bushel, but on a candlestick and it giveth light unto the whole house![15]

Eliot extended his services at the Oro Fino through the month of March. In his final service, on Easter Sunday, he urged his audience to regard Unitarianism as the fulfillment of all that was eternal in Christianity. Even as Luther and Wesley had sought to renew and spiritualize the church in their day, so religious liberals were attempting to substitute the "test of life" for tests of doctrine. Traditional beliefs such as total depravity, arbitrary election, mechanical atonement and endless punishment were clearly incompatible with the moral nature of God and man, Eliot suggested, and he urged his hearers to give credence instead to more rationally consistent teachings, such as the fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of man and "salvation from sin through Christ by spiritual atonement."[16]

---

[15] TLE, "A Second Sermon on Problem of Evil and Retribution in answer to Rev. Mr. Anderson who was put forward by the minister's union to answer my previous sermon on retribution," February 28, 1869. Eliot's reference to the "dangerous counterfeit" was to an earlier Advocate editorial against liberal Christianity.

The theater services had accomplished their objectives, Eliot told his congregation in an evaluative sermon at the end of 1869. They had "scattered the seeds of that common divine truth which in a new form might accomplish the old work of salvation from sin and error"; they had publicized the church, though that was a subordinate objective; and they had discovered in Portland "a large current against sectarianism."[17]

On several occasions during the years after Eliot's theater preaching, some observers detected what they interpreted to be a mellowing of the evangelicals' attitude toward the Unitarians. During Eliot's leave of absence in 1870, for example, Aaron Ladner Lindsley, pastor of First Presbyterian Church, agreed to preach in his place. Thomas Frazar promptly suggested to Eliot that he thought Lindsley's example had "knocked a big hole in the sectarian ring," for which the Unitarians were "much gratified." Again, when "Father" James H. Wilbur, Methodist patriarch and member of the editorial staff of the Pacific Christian Advocate, reconsidered an earlier refusal, delivered "a good practical discourse," and indicated his willingness to preach in the future, Frazar considered the "ice. . . broken." Eliot, he felt, would have "no difficulty after a while in getting an exchange with some of them."[18]

---

[16] TLE, "Liberal Christianity: What it is and What it is Not," March 28, 1869.

[17] TLE, "Prospect and Retrospect," December 25, 1869. Eliot conducted another series of services at the Oro Fino the following year without a renewal of the controversy.

The Rev. John Kimball took an equally optimistic view of the Unitarian position in Portland. Commissioned in 1871 as Unitarian missionary to Washington Territory, Kimball spent the first three months after his arrival in the Northwest working closely with Eliot in Portland. He evaluated the Portland Society as "healthy, vigorous, thoroughly organized, built upon the solid Christian foundation. . . almost the ideal of a Unitarian Christian Church." It was his impression that "the opposition, very bitter, which it encountered at first, [had] been almost entirely overcome, killed out not by controversy, but by being lived down." More than any other factor, he suggested, the quality of Eliot's public service had disarmed opponents; they simply had not been able to refute his good works "from Scripture, or reason, or prejudice, or anything else, somewhat to their amazement."[19]

---

[18] Thomas Frazar to TLE, July 3 and July 15, 1870. Refusing pulpit exchanges was the method of ostracism employed by conservative Unitarians against Theodore Parker in Boston in the 1840s and 1850s. The first Portland minister to really "exchange" with Eliot was J. A. Cruzan, the Congregationalist who later became a Unitarian.

Eliot himself saw few signs of improving relationships with the evangelicals. He wrote to Dorothea Dix late in 1871 that he was working very hard because the other churches were "magnifying and overbearing." A year later he again complained of the "persistent jealousy and crowding on the part of the other churches." The continuing antagonism of the evangelicals, he said, was inflicting him with "days and weeks of heartaches over the interferences and hindrances that are thrown in my way. It is underhanded," he lamented, "and all the harder to bear for that."[20]

---

[19] John C. Kimball to the Christian Register, May 31, 1871, in Christian Register, July 8, 1871; see also Wilbur, Eliot, 34-35.

[20] TLE to D. L. Dix, October, 1871, cited in Wilbur, Eliot, 36; and November, 1872, in Wilbur, Eliot, 41. In the draft of a letter to the Oregon Churchman, November 8, 1872, Eliot complained of "crowding when there is room enough for all," and "criticizing the polish of a companion's gun when the enemy are in front." He suggested that Episcopalians might do well to spend more energy in self-criticism and less in attempting to "cripple the work of other churches." The Churchman was often as critical of Unitarians as the Advocate. See, for example, its caustic appraisal of one of David Utter's sermons in Portland, August 22, 1878, and its scathing caricature of a Unitarian conference, October 31, 1878.

An embarrassing series of events involving the Y. M. C. A. confirmed Eliot's suspicions that resentment against Unitarians still ran deep. Eliot had participated in the work of the Y. M. C. A. and contributed to its support since June 1871, when he was elected an associate member. He was not eligibile to vote or hold office, however, since only active or life members, as "members in good and regular standing of an Evangelical Church" were accorded that privilege. Eliot was content to bide his time and wait for change in sentiment and regulations.[21]

---

[21] TLE, Certificate of Associate Membership in the Y. M. C. A., June 5, 1871. The Y. M. C. A. in Portland was only three years old when Eliot became an associate member. Like its sister Associations, the Portland organization had resolved "to maintain the control and management of affairs in the hands of those who profess to love and publicly avow their faith in Jesus the Redeemer as Divine, and who testify their faith by becoming and remaining members of churches held to be evangelical." Though Eliot may have regarded himself an "evangelical Unitarian," and qualified under this rubric, the Association had specified that full membership was limited to Evangelicals, Methodists, Baptists, Lutherans, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Christians and Episcopalians. An interesting incident was the offer of the American Unitarian Association to send free Unitarian periodicals to the Portland Association in 1871. A prompt motion to reject the offer was lost, but six years later the secretary was instructed to notify the publishers of the Unitarian to discontinue the subscription. See Howard Impecoven, "A Historical Study of the Educational Movement in Portland, Oregon, Young Men's Christian Association," (Unpublished D. Ed. Dissertation, University of Oregon, 1951), 56-63, 86, 372-373. The Y. M. C. A. did not open its active membership to Unitarians until 1931, the Y. W. C. A. until 1945. Hilands, A Time to Build, 140.

In 1874, a number of new members proposed that the Association amend its constitution to permit other than evangelical Christians to become members. Confident that their proposals would encounter no opposition, Eliot's friends, including General Oliver O. Howard, persuaded him, against his better judgment, to attend the meeting at which the amendment was to come to a vote. To the great chagrin of Eliot and his supporters, a majority of the members rejected the change.[22]

Although Eliot accepted the rebuff graciously, he felt compelled to point out the implications it held for his Society. Basing his sermon the following Sunday on the "sharp contention" between Paul and Barnabas, Eliot suggested the sharp contention between liberals and evangelicals was sufficient warrant for each to go its own way for the time being. However much some Unitarians had fancied a growing rapprochment between themselves and the evangelicals, his experience at the Y. M. C. A. had exposed such fancies as illusions. The differences were still too fundamental to gloss over. Each group was appealing to different sources of authority, and each, consequently, held fast to irreconcilable points of view. Evangelicals, as Eliot saw it, by insisting that God spoke to men only through a book, literally interpreted, were committed to such doctrines as eternal punishment (the old controversy was still fresh); while liberals, who heard the "ever-present God speaking through the reason and conscience of humanity," had advanced to "larger doctrines" and a more hopeful view of man. While such fundamental disagreements on revelation and doctrine persisted, it was foolish to pretend that differences did not exist.[23]

---

[22] Wilbur, Eliot, 45-46. Reacting, perhaps, to his rejection, Eliot shortly thereafter drafted a "Prospectus of a Free Social Reading Room in behalf of the public and for the good of our fellow beings." Eliot underscored the fact that it was to be "expressly understood to be distinct and separate from the Y. M. C. A.," though, like its counterpart, a place where one could go for relaxation and amusement "without running the gauntlet of whiskey and faro."

The Pacific Christian Advocate was elated that Eliot had finally unmasked himself. For years, the editor charged, Eliot had been attempting by "personal blandishments" and "seductive words" to persuade his audiences that the beliefs of Unitarians were "about the same as that of the Orthodox churches." Finally he had admitted, "not wisely for Unitarianism, but well for the interest of true Christianity," that those who had been willing to "minimize the differences" were "dupes" for doing so. While it was time that Eliot put a stop to his "deception" by revealing the true nature of liberal Christianity, the hidden purpose behind the publication of his sermon, or so the Advocate averred, was really to "awaken sympathy for the Unitarian cause." Whatever Eliot's intention, the Advocate concluded, his sermon served as admission of all the "old, bald-faced errors. . . to confute them before the conscience and reason of all men who have any conception of sin or what it means to cry out, 'What shall I do to be saved?'"[24]

---

[23] Oregonian, December 21, 1874.

The hardening of lines spurred Eliot's determination to erect a new church as visible evidence of Unitarian stability and growth. The limited seating capacity of the original chapel, only seven years old, was in itself sufficient reason to plan for a new structure; but more important to Eliot was the fact that the rising new spires of the evangelical churches seemed to dwarf not only the Unitarian edifice but symbolically to cast a shadow on the entire liberal cause. As early as 1872, Eliot had spoken with Robert R. Thompson, a director of the Oregon Steam Navigation Company about the need for a new church. "I pushed a little in the direction of a new church," he wrote Etta, "and at least proved he was not an off ox in that direction--in short--I was pleased with the whole conversation as a result."[25]

---

[24] Pacific Christian Advocate, December 24, 1874.

Early the following year, the members of his Society elected Simeon G. Reed a trustee, and Eliot was delighted to have another of his wealthy members so close to the heart of congregational affairs. "He has never been [a trustee] before," Eliot wrote to his father, "and now shows great interest in all we are doing." He took the first opportunity to "talk church" with Reed and was delighted to find out that "the heavy men" were "not disinclined at least to talk and feel need."[26]

Conversations on the new building continued throughout the year, and by the beginning of 1874 Eliot was prepared to proceed with a building program. He assured Reed and Thompson that he would not

---

[25] TLE to HRE, June 1872.

[26] TLE to William G. Eliot, January 26, 1873. At that same annual meeting, the First Unitarian Society had voted "to tender to Messers R.R. Thompson, J.C. Ainsworth and S.G. Reed our warmest thanks and gratitude for the liberal and timely donations to this Society whereby we are enabled to commence the New Year entirely free from debt and discouragement and with hearts full of hope and faith in the future prosperity of this church." FUS "Record Book," January 14, 1873. Eliot was very dependent in all his undertakings, both in and out of the congregation, upon a small group of wealthy people. In this respect also his position was analogous to that of his father, who regarded himself as "ministrand" of the accumulated wealth of his members. See William G. Eliot, Notebook 8, January 30, 1875, WGE.

"take one step or speak a word" without their hearty endorsement; to do so would constitute, he felt, "a thankless return for the unselfish and unfailing interest" that they had taken in the "establishment of a liberal Christian church in Portland and the Northwest." He wanted them to understand clearly, moreover, that the purpose of a new building was not simply to acquire more space; "we are reasonably comfortable and for most purposes have room enough," he admitted. Nor would "outward enlargement" necessarily affect the spirit and zeal of the "faithful band of workers" who comprised the core of the Society. Even in the present structure, Eliot added, "quiet growth is assured if we are faithful to keep honoring God and helping man." The real need for a "reasonably good edifice" related rather to the status of the Unitarian Society in the community. An attractive building would help it in the "battle against those who take advantage of our isolation" by calling the Unitarians weak, "thereby invoking prejudice against us as though our cause was to be short-lived." A prestigious building would have a magnetic effect on newcomers to Portland, encouraging them to "cast their lot with us," while the project would at the same time offer "a new object of interest for the members." Eliot hoped that Reed and Thompson would use their influence to enlist support for the vital enterprise so central to the work which, he explained, "is more than life to me."[27]

A year passed without significant progress. The panic and depression of 1873 adversely affected business conditions in Portland and made a subscription drive for the building inadvisable. At the Society's annual meeting of 1875, however, and within weeks of his exclusion from membership in the Y.M.C.A., Eliot revived the project and deemed it a "necessity" if the Unitarians were "to plant firmly our standard. . . to meet the tide of events, even in dull times." His members responded with a resolution to "build a church edifice to cost completed not less than $20,000," and appointed a committee of three, including Eliot, to solicit subscriptions in shares of $100 each. The committee declared its unalterable intention not to begin construction until the entire sum was at hand to complete the structure "free of debts," explaining that "a corporation whose sole object is the promotion of righteousness cannot afford to meet its obligations by drafts on the future."[28]

---

[27] TLE, draft to S.G. Reed and R.R. Thompson, January 1, 1874.

[28] TLE, Notes for the Pastor's report to the Annual Meeting of the FUS, January 13, 1875; "Circular" from the Building Committee of the FUS, March 1, 1875.

Again the program ground to a halt, this time for nearly two and one-half years. The general deterioration of Eliot's health and the onset of a persistent and debilitating sore throat prompted him to accept a leave of absence which extended from the spring of 1876 to the summer of 1877. On his return from Europe and St. Louis in mid-June, 1877, Eliot almost immediately began again to promote the new building. His father argued vigorously against the project, partly because of the financial outlay involved and partly because he seriously questioned the motives his son had advanced for the new plant. "After all," William Eliot advised, "the man is the power and from an upper chamber as well as from a cathedral the living force goes out; besides," he continued, "the real gain from a handsome edifice and prosperous showing is not by any means as great as supposed." His son might well reconsider the advantages of his present modest chapel, for "the seeming obscurity of position, the lowliness of standing place, sometimes *intensifies* and *widens* the influence at once. Every true and strong word you speak," he rhapsodized, "will be heard to the Atlantic."[29]

---

[29] William G. Eliot to TLE, August 22, 1877, WGE.

Eliot failed to see how "obscurity of position" would widen his influence, and, rejecting his father's counsel, he renewed efforts to secure the backing of Reed, Thompson and Ainsworth. There were great difficulties involved in erecting a prestigious church at that particular time, he advised the magnates. Some of the congregation's most valued friends had moved away; new and popular ministers had come to the pulpits of Portland's older churches; and while his own health was "sufficiently restored for moderate usefulness," he was hardly up to the full demands of the project. Nevertheless, Eliot suggested in unmistakably clear terms that if he were to remain at First Unitarian he must have "the cheer and,. . . convictions of stability which can be given us only through the outward evidences of growth."[30]

---

[30] TLE, draft to S.G. Reed, J.C. Ainsworth and R.R. Thompson, August 23, 1877. J.C. Ainsworth had been a member and trustee of the First Presbyterian Church in the 1860s, where the Reeds had also belonged. See History and Directory of the First Presbyterian Church of Portland, 20, 22. Whereas the Reeds moved from Presbyterianism into an active membership in the Unitarian Society, Ainsworth shunned future affiliations. "My church relations have never been of any enthusiastic character," he wrote Eliot, "in fact I may say they have been unfortunate, and therefore I feel more like doing good in other directions if indeed I can do any good." His religion, he advised, was to "desire the elevation of poor humanity," and since he believed that Eliot's labors were also "directed mainly to that end" he supported the Unitarians as being "freer from dead weights than any other." Ainsworth to TLE, July 8, 1874.

Although first responses to the funding campaign were gratifying and $10,000 in large pledges was quickly at hand, the needed balance of $5,000 was slow in arriving and appeals went out to the large donors to raise their pledges. "I can count on Reed, Thompson and Ainsworth," Eliot wrote to Martin Burrell; would he increase his pledge? "Everything will move forward with ease," he predicted, "if Unitarians could only "impress the fact of their stability upon the community at large and be ready to meet strangers coming to us with the same comfort. . . that there is in other church edifices."[31] In his appeals to nonmembers, such as William S. Ladd, Eliot argued that the new Unitarian church would be "an ornament to the city" and a center for promoting "the cause of righteousness."[32]

The greatest cause of pressure on Eliot was the congregation's determination to complete its new church without incurring any debt. The members had resolved upon this condition before beginning construction and reiterated it again at the laying of the cornerstone in July 1878.[33] Many subscribers had stipulated that they would honor their pledges only if the total cost were covered by cash or pledges on hand. Robert R. Thompson, for example, had subscribed on such a condition for Eliot's "own self respect and the respect of the community"; so had Captain Ainsworth and Martin Burrell.[34] Still $2,000 short of the sum necessary to unlock many pledges, and with all local sources seemingly exhausted, Eliot reluctantly set out to seek the balance from friends in San Francisco and St. Louis.[35]

---

[31] TLE to Martin S. Burrell, November 7, 1877.

[32] TLE, draft to William S. Ladd, December 4, 1877. The trustees had pared the minimum cost down from $20,000 to $15,000.

---

[33] FUS, "Record Book," January 8, 1878 and January 1879.

[34] Thompson, then living in Alameda, California, subscribed $1,000 in four installments, R.R. Thompson to TLE, August 28, 1877 and July 11, 1878. Burrell pledged $500 toward the building and $300 toward the organ, M.S. Burrell to TLE, April 14, 1875 and November 29, 1877. Ainsworth had pledged $1,000 orally, but refused to acknowledge the pledge or pay it. Theodore Wygant, an associate in the O.S.N. Co., assured Eliot that Ainsworth would pay when he was satisfied that his contribution would complete the church. "Let him alone," Wygant urged; "arguing with him only makes him more impracticable." The members had stipulated that with the consent of the shareholders construction could proceed when two-thirds of the total cost was subscribed, Wilbur, History, 26.

[35] William G. Eliot to TLE, October 18, 1878, WGE. His father had suggested that if he could raise $1,200 in San Francisco, he might "get the balance this side of New England"; he would guarantee $500 from his congregation in St. Louis.

Although he left Portland with only modest hopes, the journey was even more disappointing than Eliot had expected. He found the first Unitarian Society of San Francisco "under a cloud" in its own finances, and the trustees requested him to make no calls. Eliot felt worse about Stebbins's deep chagrin, he told Etta, than over his own failure.[36] In St. Louis the weather was against him. Only a handful of worshipers braved a howling March blizzard to hear him tell of his years in Oregon, of their commission that had sent him there, and of their opportunity "to tell the whole Northwest. . . that Unitarians are not bedouins but believers."[37]

The response to Eliot's appeal was as dismal as the weather, netting little more than the expenses of his trip. Although his father assured him privately that if all else failed "some way or other he will see me through," Eliot was anxious that Etta not share the news of this guarantee with his congregation. If they should ask how things are going, he instructed her, tell them only that "Mr. E. finds it very hard times." Eliot left St. Louis keenly disappointed and unwilling to make an appeal in Chicago, as his father had suggested, as he could not bear to "face many more San Francisco's."[38] Eliot did take with him from St. Louis, however, a deepened conviction that although his father was open-hearted, generous and "as full of good works as ever," he "couldn't live in the same town with him."[39]

---

[36] TLE to HRE, February 28, 1879 and March 2, 1879.

[37] TLE, "Notes for Appeal for Funds in St. Louis," March 16, 1879.

Hard work and generous gifts allowed the Society to finish its building "free of debt." It was a wooden structure, Victorian Gothic in style, designed by Peabody and Stearns of Boston. Horatio Stebbins came from San Francisco to deliver the dedicatory address on June 8, 1879. In an oration entitled "Things Pertaining to the Kingdom of God," Stebbins celebrated the triumphs of Anglo-Saxon civilization over barbarism, Protestantism over Roman Catholicism and liberal Christianity over Calvinistic orthodoxy. Unitarians, he submitted, had emerged from the evolutionary winnowing as "God's true spiritual stock," and as a "vanguard" whose "providential purpose" was to fill the world with intellectual and moral beings."[40] More modestly, William Eliot commended his son for building a congregation "in which a Christian life is the standard of Christian fellowship" and encouraged him to let his "light so shine."[41]

---

[38] TLE to HRE, March 11, March 12 and March 16, 1879.

[39] _Ibid._, March 12, 1879.

[40] _Oregonian_, June 9, 1879.

A new building was not the personal panacea that Eliot may have envisioned. A subtle type of hostility continued to cloud relations with other churches, causing Eliot to complain once again of the "persistent misunderstanding from other Christians and society at large" and to urge his people to muster patience for the "few more years of prejudice" he expected.[42] In 1879, the committee in charge of the Union Thanksgiving services denied Unitarians the right to participate and the following year the Oregon Churchman castigated the Unitarians' harvest concert as a "pagan service."[43] Considering the decade of the 1870s as a whole, a close associate of Eliot's concluded that

---

[41] William G. Eliot to TLE, May 19, 1879, WGE.

[42] TLE, "The Mind of Christ," January 5, 1879, and "Christ's Work in Man" January 12, 1879. Eliot cites Unitarian views of Christ as particularly open to misunderstanding.

[43] Wilbur, Eliot, 57-58. The Oregon Churchman had assailed the concert as a "Queer mixture." In reply, the Advocate, "by no means partial to Unitarian doctrine, "defended the service and called the Churchman a "self important cynic," its editor's mind a "queer mixture." Portland Christian Advocate, December 10, 1880.

> the dominating religious forces in the community, instead of welcoming the efforts of one who was beginning to be so influential in public causes which they should all have had at heart, so far magnified the theological differences that lay between them that they generally gave him the cold shoulder, and in covert ways sought to hamper or undermine his work.[44]

There were some signs of change, however, and these increased in frequency during the 1880s. For example, J.A. Cruzan, pastor of First Congregational Church, abolished Atkinson's practice of denying letters of transfer to Eliot's church.[45] The "Weekly Preacher's Meeting" elected him to member ship for the first time with deliberate assurances that "all are hearty in the wish that you should be with us in our gatherings."[46] There were no significant public controversies in the 1880s to match earlier eruptions over retribution and the Y.M.C.A. Most significant of all was the number of important positions of trust and responsibility that Eliot had accepted from public and private, religious and secular organizations. The degree of Eliot's involvement in public life was the most eloquent testimony to the esteem with which a wide spectrum of influential citizens regarded him. The Pacific Unitarian credited the first invitation to join in Union Thanksgiving Services (1894) to Unitarian participation in "united effort for the suppression of gambling and Sunday closing of saloons."[47]

---

[44] Wilbur, Eliot, 40. Earl Morse Wilbur was Eliot's associate, successor, and son-in-law, as well as his biographer. This appraisal undoubtedly reflected Eliot's own feelings, as Wilbur did not come to Portland until 1890.

[45] J.A. Cruzan to TLE, May 1 and 3, 1878. Cruzan joined in Eliot's thanksgiving services the following year in protest against the exclusion of the Unitarians from the union services.

[46] S.C. Price to TLE, February 1, 1881. On reception of this note, Eliot scribbled, "Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes."

The successful achievement of status for his congregation was one of the crucial factors behind Eliot's decision to resign his pastorate in 1892, but at least five other considerations also played a part. His health was an important cause. Eliot had suffered from a wide variety of physical ailments over the years, which, in addition to his poor eyesight and frequent periods of nervous fatigue, had prompted him to take four leaves of absence (1870, 1876-77, 1882, 1889) during his "parish years." Each time he had spoken of resigning, and each time the pleadings of his father, Dorothea Dix, and members of the Society worked a change of heart. The removal by death of both William Eliot and Dorothea Dix in 1887 may have helped to facilitate his decision.[48]

---

[47] Pacific Unitarian, III (January 1895), 86.

A third factor in Eliot's resignation was the prospect of financial independence resulting from well-planned acquisitions of real estate. He had invested over the years in valuable tracts of land in Clatsop County, near Hood River, and in Portland itself. The sale of the Springville Tract, a choice parcel of Willamette waterfront opposite St. John's, for example, was one important source of "retirement" income. A fourth factor was the arrival of an assistant, Earl Morse Wilbur, who came to Portland from Harvard Divinity School in 1890. It was understood that Wilbur would succeed Eliot if he proved himself capable, and Eliot was quickly satisfied with the energy, personality and theology of his assistant. "No one but you can know the comfort he has been to me this year," he wrote to Etta in 1891.[49]

---

[48] In 1890, for example, the Trustees told Eliot that his resignation would be a "calamity" and "endanger the future of the church." FUS "Record Book," January 28, 1890. In 1882, William Eliot told his son that when Dorothea Dix heard he intended to resign she replied with a "No! No!! NO!!!" Just how much influence William Eliot and Dorothea Dix had in keeping Eliot in the ministry is difficult to assess. His father once suggested that Eliot was never really serious about resigning, that he used the threat as a strategy, and some of his letters written during the subscription campaign for the church seem to support his father's conjecture. On the other hand, once his father and Dorothea Dix had died, Eliot did resign. William G. Eliot to TLE, August 28, 1881, WGE.

[49] TLE to HRE, June 14, 1891. Eliot jokingly referred to Wilbur, who had entered Harvard Divinity School as a Congregationalist, "a flat-footed Anti-trinitarian."

Finally, Eliot's deepening interest and involvement in social issues had made it evident for some time that he would finally have to choose between two demanding careers. Theodore Wygant's "Jeremiad" of 1883, for example, with its pointed advice to Eliot to "stick more closely to the distinctive church work" was but one forecast of a choice that Eliot finally had to make.[50]

Eliot's resignation from the First Unitarian Society was no more the end of his ministry than his formal pastorate had been the whole of it. The ideal toward which he had worked in Portland--a stable Unitarian society with a pervasive influence in the life of the community--was both pattern and hope for other metropolitan centers of the Pacific Northwest. As Unitarian societies were organized in Olympia, Tacoma, Seattle, Walla Walla, Spokane and Salem, Eliot became an active participant in their development. The role he played, the investment he made and the results that followed in each of these missionary outposts are properly part of the record of his parish years and of his broader quest for Unitarian status in the Pacific Northwest.

---

[50] HRE to TLE, January 3, 1883. Eliot's personal reaction to Wygant's criticisms was that he doubted whether they represented "any average feeling among our people"; but he also acknowledged that "we have died that death daily too many times to mind a passing expression of it." TLE to HRE, January 1883.

CHAPTER IV

BISHOP WITHOUT PORTFOLIO

> The success of our principles threatens to be
> the death of our methods.
>
> Horatio Stebbins to Thomas Lamb Eliot,
> August 18, 1897

Thomas Lamb Eliot had by no means securely established his own Society when he began to shoulder responsibilities of new Unitarian outposts in Washington Territory. As the only Unitarian minister in the Pacific Northwest, he was a natural source of counsel and information both for the new groups themselves and for the American Unitarian Association in its dealings with them. For over thirty years, without commission, compensation or formal appointment he served variously as bishop, clearinghouse, investigator, stimulator and peace-keeper for the Unitarian missionary enterprises.

It was not an easy or rewarding burden; the congregations were scattered and unstable, with few of the favorable characteristics of the Portland Society. Eliot once boasted that his own Society had no debts, dissensions or quarrels, but he could make no such claim for the newer Unitarian congregations of the

Northwest; debts, dissensions and quarrels were endemic among them. Eliot also once claimed that his own members had "not so much as heard that there are such things as radicals and conservatives,"[1] but he expended considerable emotional energy refereeing the nearly continuous jousting between the ideological elements in the outlying societies.

The new societies tended to call upon Eliot when there were problems to be solved. The problems were generally attributable to one or a combination of six basic factors: (1) the disparate membership, which, though ranging the full width of the Unitarian spectrum, often split into feuding factions; (2) lack of funds, either because of poor local support or the inability of the American Unitarian Association to deliver what it promised; (3) a succession of short pastorates followed by long vacancies, necessitating frequent rebuilding; (4) unsatisfactory ministerial types, often recent "come-outers" from orthodox denominations, men with unsettled theologies and personalities to match; (5) hostility and pressure from evangelical elements in the community, a condition that short-term ministers were neither able to fight off nor live down; (6) too much freedom and too little authority, the ambiguous legacy of Unitarian principles.

---

[1] TLE, "Notes for Appeal for Funds," 1879. The avoidance of debt was a major precept that Eliot had learned from his father. "The noun debt is compared debt, debtor, death," William Eliot once advised, "so keep the church out of debt, even if it slows a little." William G. Eliot to TLE, May 21, 1874, WGE.

The case of the Unitarian Society of Olympia, first of the younger churches in the Northwest, illustrates tendencies common to all the societies. The Olympia Society resulted from the initiative of Hazard Stevens, a son of Isaac I. Stevens, Washington Territory's first governor. Early in 1870 Stevens sent Eliot a list of eleven Unitarians resident in Olympia, with assurances that many others of "liberal persuasion" would doubtless also respond to missionary efforts there.[2] A new society offered the prospects of a colleague in the Northwest, and Eliot, already beset by a depressing sense of isolation, utilized a visit to Boston the following summer to plead for an associate in Washington Territory.[3] The American Unitarian Association responded to Eliot's "plugging away" by asking John Kimball of Beverly, Massachusetts, to go to the Coast to cooperate in Eliot's "successful and devoted labor" and relieve his isolated position.[4] The Association promised to supply between $800 and $1,000 of Kimball's salary, hoping that he could raise the remainder in the field and that the Portland congregation might supply his traveling expenses. Thomas Frazar suggested that if Kimball were "the right kind of person for pioneer missionary," he would be able to cover the costs of the journey himself.[5]

---

[2] Hazard Stevens to TLE, April 25, 1870.

[3] TLE to HRE, August 27, 1870.

Kimball and his wife came to Oregon early the following spring, first to Portland to assist Eliot and then, in June, to Olympia, which the two ministers had selected as the best site for Unitarian work in Washington. Kimball's first impressions of religious prospects in the territorial capital were unfavorable; there were "very few Unitarians proper" and far too many liberals of the "extreme radical type" who seemed to want a free religious association or "progressive lyceum" rather than a Christian church. The radicals thought his first sermon, on "The Unitarian Idea of

---

[4] Charles Lowe to TLE, September 13, 1870. Lowe had called Eliot the "senior Unitarian pastor and bishop of that whole Northwest that is destined so soon to be a populous and influential section of our country and, as I hope, of the liberal domain." Lowe to TLE, May 12, 1870.

[5] Thomas Frazar to TLE, October 6, 1870.

Christ," too orthodox while the conservatives found it too liberal.[6] After four Sundays of preaching, Kimball thought it best to let it rest at Olympia while he surveyed other cities on the Sound. At Port Gamble, Port Townsend and Seattle he found "Unitarian heads popping up to the surface all around." A second look at Olympia, however, was as discouraging as the first. Much of the "raw material" was "nebulous" in the sense that the liberals there did not seem to want anything distinctively Christian. Morover, Kimball was mortified to find on the initial subscription list the names of "liquor dealers, bail keepers and persons engaged in doubtful employment. To mix them with the respectable orthodox liberals, oh, Brother Eliot, you know that fire and water would sooner combine."[7]

Kimball was also discouraged by the failure of the Association to send him the promised salary. During his first four months on the Coast he received no financial support, and Eliot interceded for his colleague. He was thoroughly satisfied with all he could see and hear of Kimball's work, Eliot said, and he hoped that the Association would make it financially possible for him to remain and organize a circuit embracing Olympia, Seattle, Port Townsend and possibly also Walla Walla.[8] On Eliot's recommendation the Association voted to retain Kimball for another year at $150 per month, less what he could raise himself. "Amen say I" replied Eliot to Secretary Shippen's affirmation that an experienced man like Kimball was worth six young graduates. Shippen did admit, however, that the Association was tempted to replace Kimball with "a young graduate who needs but barely earn his bread."[9]

---

[6] Kimball to TLE, June 12, 1871.

[7] Kimball to TLE, July 7, 1871.

It took Kimball just about a year to provoke the evangelicals of Olympia. As with Eliot, it was a sermon on future punishment that "got the whole community aroused on the subject of theology." There were the "usual mean flings and some hard blows to bear up under," Kimball reported.[10] A writer of the Washington Standard declared that Kimball had "stirred up strife in our community. . . and brought old friends to blows," and advised Olympians "not to take *ipse dixit* of every missionary from New England as the law and gospel." Kimball thanked the paper for its criticism, which he chose to take as a compliment, and urged the pooling of church resources under one roof and under a simple gospel of Jesus Christ. "Away with such narrow sectional prejudices," he concluded; "our whole country, north, south, east, west--that is the ipse dixit of a New England missionary."[11] To Eliot, Kimball admitted that Unitarians had "to pay a pretty severe price for [their] liberty, but the liberty is worth it all."[12]

---

[8] TLE to Rush R. Shippen, August 30, 1871.

[9] Shippen to TLE, February 15, 1872.

[10] Kimball to TLE, March 29, 1872.

Opposition did not deter the Unitarians of Olympia from organizing. On March 24, 1872, thirty persons signed "A Bond of Union" in a service at which Eliot assisted Kimball. A month later Eliot returned to formally welcome the Society as a member of the American Unitarian Association. "God be praised," Kimball exulted, "we have another Unitarian Society in the Northwest."[13]

---

[11] The Washington Standard, March 23, 1872, cited in Esther McDowell, Unitarians in the State of Washington 1870-1960 (Seattle, 1966), 15.

[12] Kimball to TLE, March 29, 1872.

[13] McDowell, Unitarians, 14-15; Kimball to TLE, March 29 and April 8, 1872. Most of his members, Kimball told Eliot, were "about of the usual worth," though a few were "first class."

Eliot entertained high hopes that Kimball would remain in the Northwest and "convert the whole sound." But Kimball desired to return temporarily to the East, and he left for Ipswich, Massachusetts, in the fall of 1872. As the months passed, prospects dimmed for his return and "consumation" of work in Olympia. Mrs. Kimball had not been "cured of New England yet," Kimball wrote Eliot apologetically; "she has secretly hoped I would settle down here and be like other folks." The fact that he had left Eliot once again alone in the Northwest worried Kimball, however, and weighed on his conscience. If he would ever again accept a ministry outside of New England, he assured Eliot, it would certainly be on the Pacific Coast.[14] But he never returned.

Developments during the first interim at Olympia augured poorly for the future of the Society. When no replacement for Kimball seemed forthcoming, tension arose "between those who wished to disband and those who wished to continue."[15] One member predicted that the faithful nucleus would "have to abandon the post unless [they received] speedy reinforcement." They were tiring of lay services, while the occasional itinerants who supplied the pulpit threatened to turn the church into "a regular areopagus" for such "irregular types," as astrologers and phrenologists. Compared with other guest speakers, Thomas Condon, the Congregational missionary, was "a refreshing breath of air."[16]

---

[14] Kimball to TLE, November 6, 1872 and April 23, 1873.

[15] W. Byron Daniels to TLE, April 15, 1873.

Olympians eventually got the impression that the Association was either unwilling or unable to help them. As the second fall came and went, friends in Olympia complained to Eliot that there was no word from Boston, no promise or prospect of a minister. "The sound of the grinding is mighty low here," wrote Joe Houghton, a close friend of Eliot's, "and the grinders are getting fewer." Business was dull, it was getting harder and harder to raise money, and even many church members had concluded that railroads were a better investment prospect than religion.[17] Eliot visited Olympia as often as he could simply to keep the cause alive, and once again it was his initiative on an Eastern visit in 1874 that prompted the Association to supply Olympia with a minister. "Good news comes today from Boston," Eliot wrote his wife; "the A. U. A. has made proper appropriations and Rev. Mr. Utter and wife are to come to Puget Sound."[18]

---

[16] J.H. Houghton to TLE, May 23, 1873.

[17] Houghton to TLE, October 27, 1873 and June 2, 1874. Unitarians were not unique in their beliefs that Eastern denominational headquarters were indifferent to their needs. Almost every letter that George Henry Atkinson sent to the American Home Missionary Society was permeated with complaints about the paucity of missionaries in comparison with the size of the field to be occupied and held. See Atkinson to A.H.M.S., February 10, 1849 and November 24, 1849 (4397); July 6, 1858 (1146); October 7, 1867 (2446) and, especially, December 12, 1867, in which Atkinson claims that even the Unitarians were doing a better job of sending ministers than the Congregationalists. Atkinson's persistence led

David Utter was forced to bide his time, however, while officials debated whether the cause in Olympia was worth the $1,500 the Association had appropriated for the field. Once again there was talk of finding a young man, "inexperienced and unmarried," who would go to Olympia for half that sum. Utter was willing enough to step aside in favor of someone who was unencumbered, but no decision was forthcoming. Unless someone like Eliot gave it a good kick, Utter suggested, the creaking machinery of the Association seemed likely to wheeze to a complete halt. Secretary Shippen "is pretty certain not to act till you do," Utter advised, suggesting that Eliot pay the Secretary a call and

---

the A. H. M. S. to charge him with "extravagance in demanding men" [A. Hurgren to A. H. M. S., June 1872 (1691] and Atkinson's subsequent relations with the Society were prickly.

[18] TLE to HRE, October 16, 1874.

push through the appropriation.[19] Eliot visited Shippen and pried loose the $1,500.

Utter, his wife and infant child arrived in San Francisco on January 29, 1875, and there they stayed, partly because arrangements for travel had gone awry, partly because the trustees of the First Unitarian Society urged him to remain and assist Horatio Stebbins, who was broken with sickness and grief at the death of his wife. "Give sentence, O Judge," Utter implored Eliot; where did his duty lie? Eliot obtained authority from the Association for Utter to help Stebbins over the crisis, while both Utter and the Olympians fretted over their Society.[20]

They certainly wanted to be understanding, Joe Houghton told Eliot, but there was urgency in Olympia also. The Episcopalians had a minister heading there from the East, and there was a good deal of anxiety about which would arrive first. Moreover, the "brethren in the other denominations" had been stirred up to vigorous effort by the expectation that the Unitarians were going to have a minister. The Methodists, especially, were making a

---

[19] David Utter to TLE, September 30, 1874.

[20] Utter to TLE, January 29 and February 19, 1875.

"protracted effort to save some members of the community from the outer darkness of the liberal faith."[21] Eliot had his own personal stake in Utter's arrival at Olympia. "Here I work alone and often sad," he wrote to James Freeman Clarke; "I rejoice in the hope of Utter as a comrade."[22]

Utter arrived in Olympia under Eliot's escort early in April and soon reported that his "campaign" had opened favorably. Within six months, however, there was trouble on at least three fronts. The Society had split once again, this time on a question of propriety--should the Society sponsor dances to raise money? Utter guided the majority to respect the vocal minority and accept a delicate compromise: "so we will not dance for the church," he wrote, "but will in our own house dance for amusement and social enjoyment and make a little money incidentally." The question of money was not incidental, however; while the people of Olympia had done well enough in raising their share of Utter's support, the Association had sent nothing for over six months. Should the drought continue, Utter confided to Eliot, he would have to leave.[23]

---

[21] Houghton to TLE, January 3 and February 24, 1875.

[22] TLE to James Freeman Clarke, March 6, 1875.

[23] Utter to TLE, November 30, 1875.

The third problem involved Eliot's close personal friends, the Houghtons, who disliked what Utter was preaching. He "bore down too hard on other denominations," they complained, giving them the uneasy feeling that their Society was "becoming a free religious association."[24]

Utter weathered these storms and remained at Olympia for over five years. During the early months of Eliot's absence in Europe in 1876, Utter came often to Portland to preach and earned a reputation as "a brave preacher who speaks against what he thinks is wrong in unequivocable terms." His frequent absences in Olympia were possible because his wife, Rebecca, was able to preach in his stead. She did so well, in fact, that the members voted to print at least one of her sermons. Under Utter's direction, the Olympians built a church which Eliot assisted in dedicating in October 1877. Utter also published a short-lived monthly newspaper, The Unitarian Advocate, wherein he answered charges made in the public press against the "Christlessness of his creed and the bigotry of his church."[25]

---

[24] Ibid., February 4 and February 9, 1876.

[25] Amos Morgan to TLE, September 9, 1876; Utter to TLE, July 11, 1876; McDowell, Unitarians, 17.

A lingering financial depression brought both preacher and Society to the brink of insolvency, and late in 1879 Utter notified Eliot that unless he won appointment as Territorial Superintendent of Instruction to supplement his income, he would find it impossible to sustain himself. He failed to get the post and in April 1880 accepted a call in the Midwest.[26]

Eliot visited Olympia as often as he could, hoping to sustain the Society. His father was unhappy that Eliot was spreading himself so thin and warned him to "clearly discharge [his] mind and conscience from Olympia" because "diffused strength weakens. . . . Work well done in Portland tells all over the state; half done, the state suffers."[27] Even with Eliot's best efforts Olympia suffered. There was an especially precipitous decline in morale after the church burned down in September 1883. Shortly after the fire, Eliot visited the ruins--both structural and societal--and brooded over the prospects of resurrection: "What solemn side lights life gives! Is all this work we have done here useless? It is very hard to know or say. They will struggle on in some fashion for a while, I suppose. I wish I were younger and fresher, more hopeful than I am, and I might be some inspiration."[28] His service in Olympia, he told his mother, was a "melancholy duty."[29]

---

[26] Utter to TLE, October 31, 1879. Crompton, Unitarianism, 83, states that Utter went to Chicago, while McDowell, Unitarians, 17, says he went to Kansas City.

[27] William G. Eliot to TLE, October 1881, WGE.

Between 1884 and 1888 the Society in Olympia was under the loose direction of George H. Greer, a recent "come-outer" from Methodism, guided by Eliot into the Unitarian ministry. As he outgrew his Methodist views through the study of liberal literature, Greer began to correspond with Eliot about the best course to pursue. By 1880 he was ready to join the Unitarians in their "grand battle with ignorance, error and sin" just as soon as he had obtained title to his homestead. By 1882 he was "ready to move" and "preach under the patronage and fellowship of the Unitarians." His homestead was secure, his theology was "settled," and he was willing to "accept as essential truth . . . those ideas that [could] claim a solid foundation in science."[30]

---

[28] TLE to HRE, October 28, 1883. Eliot's father felt that Olympia's woes were attributable neither to his son, nor to the fire or depression, but to the inclusive nature of Unitarian societies in the West. "If in Olympia or elsewhere," he wrote, "there are a half dozen Unitarians who will organize a church on a religious basis and conduct it on liberal principles, but as a Christian Church, it will attract all who are worth having and will live to the glory of God without controversy or strife." William G. Eliot to TLE, November 22, 1883, WGE.

[29] TLE to Abigail A. Eliot, October 31, 1883.

Eliot, who had constantly been encouraging Greer and supplying him with Unitarian literature, advised him to spend a year at the Unitarian Seminary at Meadville, Pennsylvania. Greer did well at Meadville, and at the completion of the year a local minister advised him to "get out in the field" after he had spent some time in Boston. With the approval of Eliot and Unitarian leaders in Boston, Greer decided that Tacoma, the western terminus of the Northern Pacific Railroad, would be a more favorable location for a Unitarian mission than Olympia.[31] The older Society became a stepchild, and a fairly neglected one, while Greer sought to establish a Unitarian foothold in Tacoma.

Eliot refused to concede the hopelessness of Unitarianism in Olympia. Reports that a few faithful in the capital city wanted him to come and "awake the old church from its slumbers of several years" spurred Eliot to survey the scene and attempt to revive the remnant.[32] With his encouragement, the Association invited Napoleon Hoagland to assume charge of the Society. Hoagland arrived from Kansas in September 1890 and reorganized the congregation as Unity Church. For three years Unitarianism flourished in Olympia as Hoagland led his people into a widely-ranging program of social concerns. The congregation sponsored public meetings to discuss municipal control of public utilities, industrial training in public schools, and poverty; they promoted the establishment of a Humane Society, sponsored a series of lectures by James Whitcomb Riley, and in 1892 dedicated a large, new multi-purpose building costing in excess of $10,000. The congregation had such a lively social program during Hoagland's tenure that The Olympian predicted it "would be likely to soon open a bar and provide a prize ring in the church." During a revival, the Methodists singled out the Unitarians as a "class of unbelievers who have a dance house called a church and are going down to hell in a frightful rush." Hoagland seemed unruffled by his impending descent: "The fear of hell in the next world is one of my smallest fears," he retorted. "The hells of the present life demand all the energy and thought at my command to help abolish."[33]

---

[30] George Greer to TLE, November 14, 1880; February 15 and March 30, 1882.

[31] Greer to TLE, June 19, 1884; Grinall Reynolds to TLE, June 25, 1884; TLE, Note, July 2, 1884.

---

[32] TLE to HRE, May 12, 1890.

Hoagland went east in the summer of 1893 and never returned. In August the congregation received his resignation. The depression following the Panic of 1893 again reduced the over-extended Society "to a little handful of discouraged and financially embarrassed men and women."[34] Charles Wendte, Pacific Coast Superintendent for the Association, lamented to Eliot that the Society had "gone to pieces" and that the building was being used only for "card parties and dances and 'such.'"[35] The Association foreclosed the mortgage in 1898 and sold the building three years later to Central Baptist Church for a fraction of its cost. Not until 1952 did the "Unitarian spirit" rise again in Olympia, and then as a Fellowship, without a building or minister.[36]

---

[33] McDowell, Unitarians, 19-23.

[34] Pacific Unitarian, III (August 1895), 303.

[35] Charles W. Wendte to TLE, July 6 and July 8, 1895.

[36] McDowell, Unitarians, 23-26. William G. Eliot, Jr., gave a candid appraisal of the Unitarian efforts in Olympia: "Our work somehow ran to seed there pretty badly. The church structure was a monstrosity, the debt was overburdening, and there came a time when the controlling forces seemed to be rather more secular than even 'liberal Christian.'" William G. Eliot, Jr., to Kate Stevens Bates, March 6, 1922. Kate Stevens Bates Papers, Special Collection Division, University of Oregon Library.

The Unitarian Society of Olympia fell victim to the combination of maladies that beset Unitarianism in the Northwest generally during the late nineteenth century. The experiences of the other metropolitan Unitarian societies in the region tend to confirm the view that the problems of the Olympians were typical ones, in kind if not always in degree.[37]

Factionalism, for example, was far more pronounced at Seattle than it had been at Olympia. Founded by twelve persons who signed a "Bond of Union" in 1885, the Society in Seattle failed to generate much momentum because of a series of extremely short pastorates. Some of the ministers, such as Samuel A. Eliot, son of Harvard's president, Roderick Stebbins, Horatio's son, and William Greenleaf Eliot Jr. were capable men, but their tenure was too short to be effective.[38]

In 1894, after his own son had left Seattle to become Stebbins's assistant in San Francisco, Eliot recommended John Haynes Acton to succeed him. Eliot knew Acton well, for Acton had been pastor of the Taylor Avenue Methodist Church in Portland and editor of the Pacific Christian Advocate during the late 1870s. Eliot preached the sermon for Acton's installation in January 1895. In his response, Acton sounded a curiously negative note with the comment that "disagreements, as long as they are honest, hurt nobody." His brief ministry was a grim footnote to that observation.[39]

---

[37] The four rural Unitarian churches established in Washington before 1900 (Puyallup (1889), Ocosta (1890), McMillan (1892) and Everett (1893) had some of the same problems as the metropolitan churches, but the demise of all four before the end of the century was primarily attributable to regional economic factors. See McDowell, Unitarians, 120-133.

[38] McDowell, Unitarians, 50-59.

Trouble developed almost immediately, and Joseph Shippen, a member of the Society, tried to explain to Eliot what was happening. There was a growing division, he said, between "those of populistic and pessimistic tendencies" on the one hand, and "those who cherish Unitarianism as found in the East in thought and spirit" on the other. While he was willing to blame the hard times for much of the discord, Shippen singled out Acton's "lack of adaptation suddenly to Unitarianism as a hopeful and uplifting faith" as an important factor. Acton, moreover, could not conceal his discouragement with the membership and finances of the Society, had "dark and pessimistic tendencies," and seemed incapable of lifting the morale of his people to face the test of critical times.[40] Speaking at a baccalaureate service at the University of Washington, for example, he forecast revolution and upheaval throughout the nation, a prediction which drew a strong censure from the Seattle Post Intelligencer.[41] Acton's position in the struggle between the two elements for control of the Society drew more serious complaints than his pessimism. Marmora DeVoe, an outspoken critic of Acton, pictured the Society as "drifting into the hands of the populists" while the "real Unitarians" stood by helplessly. Dr. Acton, she felt, had encouraged this tendency by making a "strong bid for the support of the populists" through a "methodistic style of thought and delivery" and frequent "allusions of deprecation and criticism" directed toward Unitarianism.[42]

---

[39] Scott, Portland, 345, 417; Pacific Unitarian, III (February 1895), 113. During his pastorate in Seattle, Acton preached at least once for Eliot in Portland, "attracting many of those who used to hear him when pastor of the Methodist Church." Pacific Unitarian, III (September 1895), 343.

---

[40] Joseph Shippen to TLE, January 7, 1896.

[41] McDowell, Unitarians, 61-62.

[42] Marmora DeVoe to Charles W. Wendte, September 17, 1896. By "populists" or "Actonites," DeVoe seems to have designated newer adherents to Unitarianism, less conservative politically and religiously and of lower educational and economic standing than the "older Unitarians" of New England antecedents. Populism as a political movement in Washington reached a high tide in 1896 when the "People's Party" elected a majority in both houses of the

Eliot felt responsible for the situation in Seattle not only because he had recommended Acton but because Secretary George Batchelor of the Association asked him to handle the matter. Superintendent Wendte had recently resigned his position, and Eliot was the logical choice to represent the denomination's interests. Use your "wisdom and reconciling common sense to throw some light upon the problem for us," Batchelor requested.[43] Eliot spent three days in Seattle asking questions and gathering information and, as a result, requested Acton to withdraw to a "worthy field" so as not to further encourage his followers.[44] As for the future, Eliot conceded that it would take a strong man to control the two elements. He voiced hope that after the financial crisis had passed a capable minister would be able to reconcile all but the extremists and weld the old and new elements into a strong religious force.[45]

---

legislature and named the governor and his administrative subordinates. Among their objectives were economy in government, free silver, the single tax, direct election of senators, and woman suffrage. An outgrowth of hard times, populism was on the wane by 1898. See Carroll H. Wooddy, "Populism in Washington: A Study of the Legislature of 1897," The Washington Historical Quarterly, XXI (April 1930), 103-119.

[43] George Batchelor to TLE, October 12, 1896.

[44] TLE to John H. Acton, October 19, 1896.

[45] TLE to Batchelor, October 20, 1896.

Seattle's problems did not end with the departure of Acton in February 1897.[46] For nearly three years the Society was unable to obtain a successor. Samuel A. Eliot, who had become secretary of the Association, interviewed fifteen prospects for the position and found none willing to go. It was, the Secretary declared, a "deplorable situation" and one that reflected badly upon the Unitarian ministry. "This Unitarian cause of ours is not going to advance a single inch," he declared, "until we can [fill] our ministry with unselfish, devout and earnest men." Later, after the Seattle Society had rejected Earl Morse Wilbur, Eliot's former Associate, Samuel Eliot chided the constituency as well as the clergy: "It is one of the saddest signs of the times in our church organizations," he lamented,

> that men of Wilbur's stamp are not appreciated. What the churches want is the rustling, active, superficial leader who gets up dancing parties, and theatrical

---

[46] During the four-month interim between Eliot's mission and Acton's departure, there were complex maneuverings by both parties to obtain control of the church and property, and both Batchelor and Eliot feared the loss of the whole Society. See TLE to Batchelor, November 9, 1896, and Batchelor to TLE, November 27, 1896. Meanwhile, the Actonites were furious at Eliot's "interference." See TLE to James H. Allen, November 3, 1896. Eliot helped send Dr. Acton on his way by a personal contribution of twenty dollars to his back salary. R. C. Callahan to TLE, December 11, 1896; Batchelor to TLE, March 27, 1897.

> performances and opens gymnasium classes and such like. The men of that type seem to be overwhelmed with calls, but the men of real spiritual gifts often stand waiting in the market place.[47]

It was largely through Eliot's intervention that the Unitarians did not abandon work in Seattle immediately. The Association, which held the mortgage on the church, offered the building for sale, but Eliot persuaded them to withdraw it from the market.[48] To achieve this, he promised to preach once a month in Seattle, and to arrange for lay services at intervals between his visits. Even with all its problems, he reminded Samuel Eliot, Seattle would be a "pivotal" post for Unitarians in the Northwest, and the satisfaction of stabilizing that difficult field would be "all that a consecrated man could ask."[49] On October 1, 1899, William Day Simonds of Madison, Wisconsin, arrived in Seattle to keep "the Unitarian banner in the breeze."[50]

---

[47] Samuel A. Eliot to TLE, December 30, 1898 and February 28 and March 22, 1899.

[48] McDowell, Unitarians, 63-64.

[49] TLE to Samuel Eliot, February 12 and June 16, 1898.

[50] Pacific Unitarian, VII (August 1899), 349, and VIII (September 1900), 337. After the ministries of Simonds (1899-1907) and Jesse Powers (1908-1919), the church was sold to cover debts and there were only weak surges of interest in the decades that followed.

Financial problems also plagued each of the congregations and frustrated Eliot in his efforts to stabilize them. Several ministers left Olympia because they could not make ends meet when the Association became delinquent in salaries. At Seattle, squabbles over Dr. Acton's arrearage pushed warring factions further apart. As the Society at Tacoma hovered on the brink of insolvency, Secretary Reynolds suggested that George Greer should, on principle, "live off the land."[51] Almost all the societies went deeply into debt to build churches and paid the penalty during the extended business recession of the mid-1890s. Even the smaller societies at Puyallup and McMillan built churches beyond their means and defaulted accordingly. Looking for buyers for these buildings in 1895, Superintendent Wendte complained that they ought never to have been built.[52]

The Association was occasionally too enthusiastic in making promises to Eliot. When Secretary Reynolds asked Eliot to serve as the denomination's "quasi-bishop" for the Northwest during the mid-1880s, he gave assurances of generous support: "Any work in your region that you cordially approve," we shall cheerfully sustain," he promised, "but as for money, we are poor, poor indeed."[53] Edward Everett Hale, a member of the Association's Board of Directors was equally hopeful: "I beg you to know what you are too modest to imagine," Hale wrote, "that we have great confidence in your judgment and in your success, and that if you really want to have a thing done--and will say so to Mr. Reynolds--it will very likely be done. . . and all the money you would need would be gladly sent from this side."[54] The Association sent little, however, chiefly because it had little to send.

---

[51] Grindall Reynolds to TLE, October 17, 1884.

[52] Wendte to TLE, July 6 and July 8, 1895. "They were not built under my administration," he noted.

A third problem of the outlying societies was their inability to attract and hold qualified ministers. Every secretary of the Association from Charles Lowe to Samuel Eliot complained of the difficulties of staffing posts in the Far West with qualified candidates. If the towns did not appear too small or the societies too radical for a prospective minister, it might happen, as in one case, that "the wife did not covet pioneering," or "the family prevents."[55] Mrs. Kimball, for example, was not able to get New England "out of her blood."[56] It was truly as Stebbins said: "Men who are wanted at the East don't come here."[57] Only one of the societies outside of Portland was able to retain a minister for longer than six years, and pastorates of about a year in length were the general rule. The lure of the East, especially of Boston, the "Hub of the Unitarian Universe," as one writer called it,[58] seemed irresistible to some, though New England did not always prove to be the Unitarian paradise that it sometimes seemed from a Western vantage point. John Kimball, for one, complained to Eliot from his comfortable settlement in Newport, Rhode Island, "Why, Eliot, it is easier building up the new churches at the West than to revive one set of these old dry bones at the East."[59] Nevertheless, many returned East, so many, in fact, that the Pacific Unitarian greeted a rumor of Charles Wendte's imminent removal to Boston with the question, "What is Boston that all our young men shall be sent thither as missionaries?"[60]

---

[53] Reynolds to TLE, March 9, 1887.

[54] Edward Everett Hale to TLE, January 22, 1883.

[55] Rush R. Shippen to TLE, September 22, 1873.

---

[56] Kimball to TLE, November 6, 1872.

[57] Stebbins to TLE, October 15, 1890.

[58] Pacific Unitarian, VIII (August 1900), 294.

[59] Kimball to TLE, April 8, 1875.

[60] Pacific Unitarian, IV (July 1896), 261.

Olympia had settled ministers for less than half of the years of its existence, and Seattle had difficulty in keeping its ministers even before Dr. Acton's controversial pastorate. Roderick Stebbins, for example, took over in Seattle in 1890 at Eliot's personal invitation and with the promise that he would remain for a substantial time. Two months after he arrived, however, he wrote to Eliot asking release from his commitment. "The demands upon me from my Massachusetts home are so great," he wrote, "that I am forced to yield to them." He was greatly troubled in conscience, he admitted, as he asked for Eliot's peaceful release. "Give me the blessing you have promised me and let me go," he pleaded. Four days later he was gone.[61] Stebbins was succeeded by William G. Eliot, Jr., who spent nearly three relatively happy and successful years in Seattle. Political unrest, darkening financial prospects and a hostile editorial against him in the Evening Call helped him decide to accept the offer as assistant to

---

[60] Pacific Unitarian, IV (July 1896), 261.

[61] Roderick Stebbins to TLE, February 20, 1891; Horatio Stebbins to TLE, February 24, 1891.

Horatio Stebbins in San Francisco.[62]

Unitarian work in Walla Walla ended with the departure of Edward Galvin in 1879 because neither Eliot nor anyone else could find a man willing to succeed him. Galvin, who came West to fill Eliot's pulpit during the winter of 1876-77, moved to Walla Walla on Eliot's return and within a month had built up audiences of some fifty regular listeners. Two developments caused Galvin to terminate his ministry: the Association failed to support him as it had promised, and his bride, Eliot's sister-in-law, experienced the same kind of traumatic emotional upheaval that troubled Etta in leaving Congregationalism. It was "a severe ordeal," her husband reported; Mary thought herself guilty of the "unpardonable sin" by going "counter to her convictions . . . chief among which [stood] the Deity of Christ." Galvin took his wife home to Rebecca Mack in St. Louis in December 1879 and found a Unitarian pulpit for himself in Chicago.[63]

---

[62] William G. Eliot Jr. to TLE, January 30, 1894 and February 13, 1894. Eliot wrote his father that politics and finance in Seattle were "in a fearful way," that there was not one good man for mayor among the five tickets, and that the hard times had "turned men seamy side out."

[63] Edward I. Galvin to TLE, February 7, May 25, July 13, August 6, September 4, October 4 and November 26, 1877; November 26, 1878; December 22, 1879; TLE to HRE, August 31, 1877.

Eliot suggested one M.R. Schermerhorn of Poughkeepsie, New York, for the Society in Walla Walla. "A strong pulpit manner and immediatism is almost indispensable in an organization there," he wrote to Secretary Reynolds.[64] Schermerhorn was apparently acquainted with the Society in Walla Walla, however, and while he thanked Eliot for proposing his name, he regretted that he could not work in so small a town "or with such radical elements as I learn make up the so-called liberals there." He had become increasingly more conservative, he wrote, to the extent that he could "do nothing without the symbols or divine and historic methods of Christianity." As a Christian theist he felt he could work more easily with or in orthodox churches than free religionist societies, and having heard that most of the liberals in Walla Walla were "Ingersollites," Schermerhorn feared he could do nothing with them.[65] Two years later, Charles Wendte visited Walla Walla and confirmed Schermerhorn's impressions. Forty or fifty people turned out for his preaching, but there were few willing to cooperate in reviving the society. Unitarianism was a dead letter in Walla Walla for the remainder of the century.[66]

---

[64] TLE to Reynolds, July 3, 1884.

[65] M.R. Schermerhorn to TLE, September 28, 1884.

No congregation was able to surpass the Unitarian Society of Spokane in the number, variety and mobility of its ministers. An outgrowth of one of Charles Wendte's early missionary tours, the Society incorporated in the spring of 1887 and called Edward M. Wheelock to its pulpit. "An abolitionist of the Garrison Stamp," Wheelock had served a Unitarian parish in New Hampshire before the Civil War. On one occasion he "had preached a sermon on John Brown so inflammatory that the state of Virginia offered a reward for his capture, dead or alive." After the War, Wheelock moved to Texas, working first with the Freedmen's Bureau and later as a newspaper publisher. His colorful career had commended itself to Wendte, who felt that the liberals of Spokane would embrace him warmly. "It is a radical church as a whole," Wendte wrote of Spokane, "almost as much so as Tacoma or Oakland."[67]

After Wheelock's early return to Texas, there was a regular procession of preachers to the Spokane pulpit. Alfred G. Wilson, the local Methodist minister, served briefly. Joseph W. Stocks, a graduate of Harvard Divinity School, showed great promise but died within three months of typhoid fever. E. M. Fairchild, a graduate of Andover whose "enlarging views" prompted him to "cast his lot with the Unitarian Fellowship," remained less than a year. Alfred Wilson, the Methodist who had by now gone into business, again preached to the Society. Oliver J. Fairfield of Bedford, Massachusetts, ministered for five years before returning to the East in 1901. In the years following the turn of the century, and before the final expiration of the Society, another former Methodist, a former Congregationalist (John A. Cruzan, formerly of Portland) and a defrocked Reformed minister took their turns in Spokane.[68] It was not surprising that Alfred Wilson should find that there were "very few traditional Unitarians" in his Society, and that the majority of his members were "come-outers from other sects."[69] Charles Wendte, though rating the Spokane Society as "best off of all" the Unitarian churches on the Pacific Coast in 1895 because of its freedom from debt, lamented its grave need for a minister.[70]

---

[66] Crompton, Unitarianism, 108.

[67] Ibid., 109-110; Wendte to TLE, July 27, 1887.

---

[68] McDowell, Unitarians, 97-103.

[69] Pacific Unitarian, II (August 1894), 301, 303.

[70] Wendte to TLE, July 6, 1895.

A fourth problem common to the younger churches stemmed from the utilization of come-outers. Although this practice occasionally brought on more problems than it solved, there were a number of converts in the clerical ranks. Acton at Seattle, for example, offended the Eastern core of his Society by frequently lapsing into "Methodistic" thought and mannerisms. George Greer of Tacoma amused Etta Eliot, who could "hear the wheels of the new theological machinery creak."[71] Some of the come-outers liked to retrace the steps of their conversion. David Utter of Olympia likened his own youthful transition from the Disciples to the Unitarians to that of the character of David in James Lane Allen's novel, The Reign of Law.[72] Frank A. Powell, who became pastor of the Unitarian Society in Salem in 1903 detailed his passage from orthodoxy in an article, "How I Became a Unitarian."[73] Rapid movement from orthodox to Unitarian pulpits seems to have been a fairly common phenomenon in California as well.[74] Eliot felt that the practice bred a certain indefiniteness that was damaging to Unitarianism, as he suggested in advising George Greer:

---

[71] HRE to TLE, May 11, 1885.

[72] Pacific Unitarian, IX (March 1901), 134-136.

[73] Ibid., XI (June 1903), 300-301.

> Characterize your work with definiteness as that of Christianity in the broad and deep way . . . . A definite name and aspiration of religion will attract the true of mind and heart. Those who are afraid of our name and institutional life of the church cannot help us or we them, except after we have worked long in a place.[75]

Hostility from evangelical groups was another staple in the Unitarian diet. Eliot had found an abundance of it in Portland, his son sampled the fare in Seattle, and the ministers in Olympia encountered a good deal of it. In Tacoma, Greer reported, the Episcopalians, in conjunction with the land company and the local newspaper, the Ledger, had staked a "preemptive claim" on religion; even the Houghtons had found it expedient to join the Episcopal church. Greer also had encountered significant opposition from the Congregationalists and Presbyterians.[76] In Salem, where the Unitarians had taken a long time to develop an organization because of the "incongruity of the elements," they encountered bitter opposition, according to William Copeland, the first minister. "Salem was founded by the Methodists, is the seat of a Methodist University, and the audacity of the Unitarians in building a church has never been forgiven," Copeland explained.[77] Like its sister congregations, the Salem church suffered from a combination of financial problems, internal dissension and vacant pulpits.

---

[74] In California, Charles G. Ames, first Unitarian missionary to the Pacific Coast, exemplified a number of the tendencies under discussion. Only shortly before he had been in the Free Baptist ministry. After seven years in Santa Cruz and San Jose among liberals he described as "mobs" rather than organizations, he "fled the coast" for a more stable charge in Germantown, Pennsylvania. Charles G. Ames to TLE, April 8, 1869; December 23, 1869; October 30, 1872; Crompton, Unitarianism, 57-58. In a later period, J. Herndon Garnett moved quickly from the pulpit of the Baptist Church of San Jose to the Unitarian pulpit of the same city, and within four months of preaching his first Unitarian sermon became a member of the executive committee of the Pacific Unitarian. His new colleagues were quick to cite him as a shining example of seeing the light. Pacific Unitarian, I (January 1893), 80; I (April 1893), 158 and 161. The Unitarians seemed proud to claim these men as their own and publicize their conversions.

[75] TLE to Greer, September 29, 1884.

---

[76] Greer to TLE, September 8 and December 2, 1884.

[77] Crompton, Unitarianism, 108; TLE to J.W. Spriggs, February 16, 1887; Leo Willis to TLE, November 23, 1888; TLE to Wendte, May 13, 1896; Pacific Unitarian, VII (December 1898), 49. Among those who supplied Copeland's pulpit during his illness of 1895 was "Mrs. Thomas L. Eliot, who is not only a poetess of acknowledged merit, but occassionally drops into preaching." Pacific Unitarian, III (August 1895), 305.

All of the Unitarian societies in the Northwest also experienced the defects of Unitarianism's most valued principle--freedom. The lack of structure, continuity and authority tended to magnify the disintegrating effects of other problems and send a society spinning off into chaos. As Horatio Stebbins wrote to Eliot, "The success of our principles threatens to be the death of our methods."[78]

One could never be quite sure in what directions a society might turn. The church in Tacoma, for example, became a Free Church shortly after Alfred H. Martin became its minister in 1891. Within months of Martin's arrival, rumbles of discontent reached Eliot's ears from conservative friends in Tacoma. Samuel Collyer, cashier of Merchants National Bank, complained that the Society's new minister had "no hold on anything." The situation was becoming worse from week to week as a "hopeless minority" of eighteen members watched passively the progressive radicalization of their Society. "If the general Conference of Pacific Coast Unitarian Churches approves of the Unitarianism we get at Tacoma, then I say, God help us," Collyer wrote to Eliot, "for we don't seem to have a rock to stand on." It would not have happened, Collyer declared, if Eliot had been consulted on the choice of a minister.

---

[78] Stebbins to TLE, August 18, 1897.

Wendte's recommendation was the cause, he affirmed, and his temporary replacement, Van Ness, had "refused to take a stand and pull us out of this hole." Lacking support from the other conservatives, Collyer resigned from the Board of Trustees.[79]

The next development was unexpected. On November 27, 1892, the First Unitarian Society of Tacoma announced itself as the First Free Church of Tacoma. The old name, the Society declared, had been "sectarian and fettering." The new name proclaimed a philosophy "in which the theist and the atheist, the materialist and spiritualist, the believer and the disbeliever [could] stand together on a common platform for the attainment of a common aim, . . . a church planted on the eternal and indestructible basis of human nature itself." Unitarianism, it asserted, had become as sectarian as the sects it repudiated when the National Conference in 1865 and again in 1866 had adopted an avowedly Christian standard; its disclaimer of credalism in 1882 amounted to nothing more than "verbal juggling" and "intellectual dishonesty." In the spirit of

---

[79] Martin had been active in the Free Religious Association in Boston. See Crompton, Unitarianism, 145-146; Samuel Collyer to TLE, October 15, 1890; June 5, 1891.

1867, of Frothingham and the Free Religious Association, the First Free Church of Tacoma pledged loyalty to the Unitarian movement, but not to the denomination.[80]

The news about Tacoma hit Eliot as a complete surprise. He advised Charles Murdock, editor of the Pacific Unitarian, to say as little about the defection as possible. "The bad taste of it astonishes me more than anything else," Eliot grumbled, scarcely concealing his anger. If Murdock would begin a discussion of it, there would be no end to it, and there might even possibly be foolish breaks in other churches. Above all, Eliot counseled, it was imperative that the "Tacomaites" not be permitted to pose as martyrs. "We must extend them conventional courtesy and let them alone," Eliot concluded, "if not serenely at least pointedly."[81] Murdock generally followed Eliot's advice: "Concerning the action of the church at Tacoma," he editorialized," we have nothing to say. We publish the facts as news, but decline to be drawn into any controversy." Subsequently, he wrote approvingly of both Martin and his congregation, "by whatever name." The same issue, however, contained an article on "The Unitarian Name," a defense of the symbol that "represents too much that is good and worthwhile to be abandoned," written by Henrietta Eliot.[82]

---

[80] Pacific Unitarian, I (December, 1892): Circular, "The First Free Church of Tacoma." In the preamble and Article I of the Constitution of the National Conference of Unitarian Churches, adopted in 1865, and Article IX, adopted in 1866, the representative Unitarian body affirmed its "allegiance to the gospel of Jesus Christ," a credal statement altogether unacceptable to the liberals, who, under Octavius Brooks Frothingham, founded the Free Religious Association the following year. In 1882, the National Conference, as a gesture of conciliation to the liberals, adopted Article X which read in part: "they [Articles I and IX] are no authoritative test of Unitarianism and are not intended to exclude from our fellowship any who, while differing from us in belief, are in general sympathy with our purposes and practical aims." This latter article the liberals of Tacoma thought to be "juggling" and "dishonesty."

Eliot had involved himself deeply with Unitarian missionary efforts in the Northwest, and he was keenly disappointed that by the turn of the century every society except the one at Portland was either defunct or deeply in trouble.[83] Eliot's sporadic services as preacher, counselor and friend had proved inadequate to fortify the young societies against internal defects and external pressures. The composition of congregations, the short supply of ministers and the failure of denominational support were largely beyond his powers to control. Nor could Eliot, try as he might, transfer his own vision of the ideal Unitarian society--with its conservative orientation and delicate balance between freedom and responsibility--to those who did not share the values of his own traditions.

---

[81] TLE to Charles Murdock, December 1892. After Martin's resignation in 1907, the church became an Ethical Society before breaking up. McDowell, Unitarians, 35-38.

[82] Murdock, cited in Crompton, Unitarianism, 146. The Society in Tacoma elected to remain an "affiliated" Society in relation to the other Unitarian churches of the Pacific Coast and to participate with them in conferences and joint endeavors. Henrietta R. Eliot, "The Unitarian Name," Pacific Unitarian, II (August 1894), 294-295.

---

[83] Nor was the First Unitarian Society of Portland completely immune from the pervasive difficulties that beset Unitarianism throughout the Northwest at "the troubled turn of the century." A series of financial crises and a succession of short ministries brought the venerable mother church of the Northwest to the brink of closure. Eliot's gratuitous service as Pastor Emeritus during this period helped assure the survival of the Society. See Hilands, A Time to Build, 47-58. Comparatively, however, the Portland Society was a shining example. Samuel Eliot later wrote to Thomas Eliot: "The stability and widespread influence of the church in Portland is an encouragement to us all. How often you have had to steady the threatened cause at Seattle, at Spokane and at other points!" Samuel A. Eliot to TLE, June 1, 1931.

CHAPTER V

THE DENOMINATIONALIST

> I wonder at the strength and beauty of the Unitarian church anywhere, in view of the superior numbers, wealth, discipline and zeal of the Evangelical hosts, combined, as they tacitly or openly are, to resist us.
>
> Thomas Lamb Eliot to Charles Murdock,
> November 1895

Thomas Lamb Eliot's contributions to the expansion of Unitarianism were not limited to breathing life into expiring societies in the Northwest. To Unitarian officials who found stable societies in short supply on the Pacific Coast, the First Unitarian Society of Portland was symbolically valuable as a secure beachhead on a foreign shore. Eliot was more than an exceptional example, however. In a sect that had advanced nonsectarianism to the status of dogma and regarded denominationalism as a residue of the dark ages, Eliot was one of a small group of loyal denominationalists. Not only did he urge Unitarians to cultivate "a denominational consciousness and life,"[1] he actively served the interests of the Association whenever possible. Although he refused, for personal reasons, a number of key positions within his church body, Eliot was intrinsically loyal to the Unitarian organization.

---

[1] Pacific Unitarian, III (December 1894), 53.

He was, first of all, sympathetic with the concerns of those Unitarian leaders who wished to make the American Unitarian Association an effective missionary organization. Not all Unitarians agreed that this was a worthy objective. There were those who believed that Unitarians would never be numerous because their views were not readily comprehensible to the masses. James Freeman Clarke complained about colleagues who repudiated mission work because they did not want to make Unitarians too common.[2] President Charles Eliot of Harvard likened Unitarians to Primitive Baptists because of their opposition to the organization of missions "or any other means of propagating their faith."[3] The American Unitarian Association, organized (1825) partly to extend liberal influence by concerted mission endeavor, suffered in proportion to the prevalence of this anti-mission spirit. An organization of individuals rather than societies, the Association was neither representative nor effectual, particularly in its early years. A decade after its founding in 1835, the Association included representatives from only one-third of the Unitarian churches in the country. Financial support was equally skimpy, particularly from the churches of Boston.[4]

---

[2] Cooke, Unitarianism, 142.

[3] Pacific Unitarian, V (March 1897), 151.

Auxiliary organizations gradually came into being to take up the slack. Eliot's father had helped create the Western Unitarian Conference in 1852 to sustain Western missions, and the National Conference of Unitarian Churches, assembling initially in 1865 as the first truly representative Unitarian body, sought also to back liberal evangelists with the weight of concerted moral and financial support. Neither the Western nor National conferences completely overcame the centrifugal tendencies inherent in both liberalism and congregationalism, however; each conference, in fact, only further fragmented Unitarianism and its efforts by the adoption of theological stances that alienated sizable portions of its constituency. The Association, consequently, limped along as best it could, criticized from all sides, financially embarrassed, commanding little respect, less money and no authority.[5]

---

[4] Cooke, Unitarianism, 160.

[5] The Western Conference floundered first on the issue of Abolitionism (see Chapter I), later on the Western Issue (see below). The National Conference adopted conservative, pro-Christian articles in its first two meetings (1865 and 1866), which led disaffected radicals to organize the Free Religious Association.

Thomas Eliot was perhaps the most consistently loyal organization man among the three principal Unitarian leaders on the Pacific Coast. While he was not willing to surrender his judgment or individuality to any centralized authority, he hoped to diffuse liberal views through the same kind of orderly effort that the more authoritarian churches had successfully employed. Other leaders on the Coast were not so eager to embrace denominationalism. Horatio Stebbins, for example, shared the older Eastern disdain toward extensive mission work. "A few churches of high character," he asserted "would be more valuable for us and our cause than twenty-five such as we have got." The liberal body, he affirmed, would always be "that small company which on earth is the personification of that Spirit of Truth which Jesus proclaimed." He loathed the "politics of religion" even more than the "politics of the legislature," opposed the establishment of a Unitarian seminary on the Pacific Coast, regarded the influx of converts from orthodoxy as tending to lower the "tone and quality" of the Unitarian constituency and, in the kind of romantic metaphor to which he was addicted, estimated the "glory" of his ministry as having "lived in the wilderness and . . . kept the campfire glowing."[6] Wendte criticized Stebbins on a variety of issues, chiefly for his want of vision; others claimed he was just plain lazy.[7] But Henry Whitney Bellows, editor of the Liberal Christian, touched the heart of the establishment's complaint: "Stebbins does not shine in the active devotion to our denominational interests."[8]

Curiously enough, even Charles W. Wendte, superintendent of Unitarian churches on the Coast for much of the decade 1886-1896, and poles apart from Stebbins, also lacked denominational consciousness. A radical and Germanophile, he found his administrative responsibilities frustrating and confining, his parochial duties irritating. He complained that the Society he served in Oakland was far too conservative for his blood, and he characterized his members variously as "an indifferent and sluggish crowd" and an "exacting congregation."[9] The Association's missionary enterprises on the Coast, which he publicly portrayed in such glowing terms in the pages of the Pacific Unitarian, were as often rimmed in black on the pages of his private correspondence. Distance from the center of supply, the enormous country to cover, and dissatisfaction with the officials in Boston were constant complaints. Criticism of both his work and decisions from the corps of individualists who manned the Unitarian outposts seemed to mount in crescendo. "I am just now tasting all the bitterness of the Superintendency," he wrote Eliot near the end of his incumbency. "Every church that failed and every minister that has not secured a place or missionary help looks upon me as an enemy and a foe to our cause. Protests and appeals are pouring in."[10] Chaos, controversy and criticism were not peculiar to Unitarian missions in the West, but absence of remedial structure seemed to make them more pronounced and their effects more keenly felt among the liberals.

---

[6] Stebbins to TLE, October 15, 1890; September 4, 1889; May 28, 1891; December 9, 1889; February 7, 1898; August 22, 1899.

[7] George Partridge to TLE, July 31, 1871.

[8] Henry W. Bellows to TLE, January 20, 1870.

[9] Wendte to TLE, May 6, 1888 and March 3, 1892.

---

[10] Ibid., December 2, 1895. Wendte, a free spirit, was more comfortable in international and supra-denominational religious movements and became involved around the turn of the century in various international congresses and world parliaments of religion. George W. Stone, who held Wendte's old job from 1900-1907, resigned with virtually the same complaints as his predecessor. He was "too much of a congregationalist for this one-man administration," had "no disposition to engage in controversy," was in constant disagreement with the "powers that be," and "out of sympathy with the

Eliot was more partisan than Stebbins, more irenic than Wendte. His partisanship related to the conviction that Unitarianism possessed too many vital insights either to be confined to one section of the country and a few prestigious congregations or to allow its dissemination to chance. Eliot deliberately cultivated an irenic disposition both on principle and as the wisest practical policy. Some of his correspondents, notably Wendte, habitually criticized officials and colleagues in the strongest terms.[11] Charles Murdock very deeply regretted that a "contentious spirit" pervaded the denomination, and Eliot agreed that the way some men "cut and thrust" saddened him also.[12] Eliot's appraisals of his peers, including opponents, were invariably seasoned with charity and restraint. For

---

policy and methods now in use." George Stone to TLE, September 10, 1907. Stone accidentally sent this critical letter to the wrong Eliot, President Samuel Eliot of the A. U. A. President Eliot thought the mistake "delightfully humorous"; and Stone's complaint (that he was "too good a congregationalist to work with [the] Board of Directors") especially ironical. "We all know," said Eliot, "that [Stone] has been the most arbitrary Bishop in his own diocese that our communion has ever produced." Samuel A. Eliot to TLE, September 20, 1907.

[11] Wendte made the mistake of passing along a remark that Eliot had made about his brother, Christopher, which offended the latter and required Eliot to write a letter of explanation. "Wendte talks too much," Eliot began. TLE to Christopher Eliot, n. d.

[12] Charles Murdock to TLE, April 12, 1890, and TLE, draft to Murdock, April 12, 1890.

these qualities, as well as for the conspicuous success of his own missionary efforts in Portland, the American Unitarian Association turned to Eliot to resolve the most vexing of its many problems in the late nineteenth century, the "Western Issue."

The formal incorporation of the Western Unitarian Conference in 1882, together with its adoption of the motto, "Freedom, Fellowship and Character in Religion," touched off a war of words, personalities and publications that rapidly divided Unitarians. Leaders of the radical faction were Jenkin Lloyd Jones, Secretary of the Conference, William Channing Gannett, son of Channing's associate, and Charles W. Wendte, who in 1882 was minister in Newport, Rhode Island. These men were essentially ethical humanists who urged the emancipation of Unitarianism from the shackles of Christianity, theism and credalism. Their literary voice was Unity, edited by Jones, though Samuel Barrows, editor of the Association's official organ, the Christian Register, often supported the radical positions. Arrayed against the radicals were a large number of Eastern Unitarian leaders, including Professor Frederick Hedge of Harvard, James Freeman Clarke and Grindall Reynolds, Secretary of the Association. These men also had the support of several prominent Midwestern conservatives including Jabez Sunderland, a former Baptist minister and associate editor of Unity, Jasper Douthit, editor of a conservative Unitarian periodical, Our Best Words, and William Greenleaf Eliot, whose position on the central issue was oft-repeated and well known: "Whenever the A. U. A. consents to abandon the name of Christian, I go out of it. Our holding to Christ is our only strength, and when we are ashamed of him, the Lord will be ashamed of us."[13]

The conservatives were anxious to keep Unitarianism within the Christian camp and insisted on retaining such phrases as "pure Christianity" and "the leadership of Jesus" in expressions of the Unitarian faith. For them, "Freedom, Fellowship and Character" was ominously reminiscent of the evanescent Free Religious Association and Felix Adler's Ethical Culture Society. There were also geographic and social overtones to the division. The radicals were strongest in the Midwest and the conservatives in the Northeast, though there were important exceptions to the general pattern. Some birthright Unitarians from the East regarded Midwestern Unitarian societies as "little better than conventicles of lower-middle-class radicals with nothing of the reverence or refinement of the Old

---

[13] Charles H. Lyttle, Freedom Moves West, 163-175; William G. Eliot to TLE, August 1, 1875, WGE.

Colonial shrines in the East," while Bostonians had supposedly dubbed "big, hearty 'Jenk Jones'" the "suspender Secretary."[14]

Jones resigned as Conference Secretary in 1884 to devote full time to his society in Chicago and to Unity. His successor in charge of the missionary work of the Western Conference was the more conservative Sunderland. Sunderland's first official report was severely critical of the "utterly heterogeneous" churches founded during Jones's tenure. Parties coalesced behind the two men and the positions they represented, and the war was on. Sunderland founded yet another periodical, the Unitarian, expressly to counter Unity's propaganda, and a new organization, the Western Unitarian Association, to cooperate with the American Unitarian Association in the interests of "pure Christianity." The year following the schism in the Western Conference was characterized as "electric with controversy."[15]

Eliot, already a veteran of more local controversies than he cared to remember, was loath to enlist in either camp, though his sympathies were obviously with the conservatives. He had told his father's congregation in 1879 that his own Society was so far away and so deeply engaged in its own activities "that there has been no time for comparison of doctrinal plumage."[16] As time went on, it became increasingly difficult for Eliot to maintain a detached neutrality. For one thing, his father's congregation, as one of the eight founding societies of the new Western Unitarian Association, had sided strongly with the conservative faction. For another, conservative leaders sought to enlist him and his congregation on their side. Jasper Douthit asked Eliot's help in making Our Best Words "more aggressively Christian."[17] Jabez Sunderland, fearing that the Free Religion people might drive liberal Christians back into orthodoxy, asked the same kind of advice: "What can be done to save the Unitarianism of the West to Christianity?" Sunderland was clearly disappointed with Eliot's choice; though he could understand that Portland's Unitarians should prefer the relative peace of their own Pacific Coast Conference to the strife of the

---

[14] Lyttle, Freedom, 176-177.

[15] Ibid., 178-188. On Jones, see Crompton, Unitarianism, 61, 85-93, 120-124.

---

[16] TLE, "Notes for Appeal for Funds, 1879."

[17] Jasper Douthit to TLE, January 5, 1884.

Western Conference, he regretted the loss of a congregation that stood "so clearly for the Christian position."[18]

Many West Coast Unitarians shared Eliot's desire to remain aloof from the Western Issue. The most vigorous supporter of the radicals on the Coast was Charles Wendte, who, like Jones and Gannett, had been active in the Free Religious Association. But even Wendte refused to press the radical position, partly because of his own position as Superintendent and partly because his own Society at Oakland, wishing to be known as a distinctly Christian church, was in the camp of his enemies. Personally, he told Eliot, he was sorry that the radical stand of the Western Conference had precipitated a schism, and he counseled the churches of the Coast to keep out of their fight. "The issue is not raised with us," he advised, "and we need not concern ourselves with their troubles." The ensuing bitterness, he added later, was largely a war of personalities.[19] Another correspondent labeled it a war of words,[20] and Horatio Stebbins declared, predictably, that he had no more patience with it than fiat money. Gannett, Stebbins concluded, "has corns on his soul which he mistakes for conscience."[21] Clearly, the most prudent course for Eliot was to heed the advice of his friends and avoid the dispute altogether.

---

[18] Jabez Sunderland to TLE, June 13, 1884 and December 1, 1884.

[19] Crompton, Unitarianism, 122-123; Wendte to TLE, June 12, 1886 and July 29, 1886.

[20] Charles Noyes to TLE, June 16, 1886.

A telegram from Secretary Reynolds quickly ended Eliot's isolation from the Western Issue, though rumors that the Association was considering his appointment as its Western Agent had already reached his ears. A month before the telegram, Jasper Douthit had jubilantly congratulated Eliot on his selection and asked him to see to the Society at Matoon, Illinois, as quickly as he could.[22] Wendte had also warned Eliot of the appointment: "You will probably receive notice of your election as Western Secretary soon. I haven't a word to say--except God Bless you!"[23] Forewarned, Eliot was also forearmed, and immediately upon receiving the telegram--and before Reynold's letter of confirmation and explanation had arrived--he had dispatched a panic-stricken and angry refusal to the

---

[21] Stebbins to TLE, September 27, 1886.

[22] Douthit to TLE, May 6, 1887. Up to this time the Association had entrusted Western missionary work to the Western Conference. The appointment of Eliot as its Western Agent signaled the Association's determination to bring this work back under its own direction.

[23] Wendte to TLE, July 12, 1887.

Secretary. "I cannot await the letter before sending my unqualified declination," he wrote. He deeply regretted that his name had been permitted to come before the Board as a candidate, especially since he had asked Wendte on July 4 to "use any means, including the telegraph," to prevent his nomination.[24]

Wendte had done all he could, he told Eliot, but either his own letter to Reynolds had arrived after the nomination was already made, or else the Board had felt like expressing its regard. Wendte hoped that Eliot would be willing to reconsider and that he would at least await Reynold's letter before making a final decision. "It would be more courteous," he remonstrated, "and anyhow you ought to know all the points involved." While he would rejoice in Eliot's decision to remain in Portland for the sake of the cause on the Coast, he was also ready to applaud the Association in its acquisition of a "firm, wise, kindly hand."[25]

Reynold's formal letter of notification was a compelling and complimentary document, difficult for Eliot to ignore or reject out of hand. It assured him of the unanimous vote and confidence of the

---

[24] TLE to Reynolds, July 13, 1887.

[25] Wendte to TLE, July 15, 1887.

Association's board and urged him to assume the post for at least a year's trial. The arguments the Secretary advanced were logical and familiar. The refusal of the Western Conference to base its missionary work on Christian theism, however broad and generous, had left the Association the alternatives of either adopting that work completely itself, or of losing the support of a large number of its best churches and of being seriously crippled in its undertakings. The Association needed an agent, Reynolds continued, in no way connected with the previous unhappy divisions and a man who had secured the confidence of the entire body. He had to be an experienced missionary himself, a sound judge of men and affairs, and, while a Christian theist, "in no harsh and narrow way."

Eliot met all the Association's criteria better than any other candidate, Reynolds informed him. Although he was firm and vigorous, he would at the same time run "little danger of collision with anyone." He would be able both to lessen the intense bitterness and win the confidence of those men in the Western Conference who were ready to cooperate with anyone but an offensive protagonist. Eliot ought to consider his acceptance a duty owed to the cause. Personally, Reynolds added, he felt that a change of duty could well bring to Eliot a "constructive, uniting, enlarging work."[26]

By the time Eliot read of the Association's confidence in him, his impulsive refusal already lay on Grindall Reynold's desk. The Secretary refused to accept his letter of declination as final, however, and suggested that Eliot take ample time to consider the matter maturely. Reminding Eliot once again that in the consensus of the Board he was the best man for a difficult job, he prodded the Oregonian's sensitive conscience: "If you decline. . . you will miss a very great opportunity to do lasting good to our body." The gravity of the situation justified both his own importunity and Eliot's maturer consideration.[27] Reynolds at the same time asked Wendte to urge Eliot.[28]

Circumstances soon combined to make Eliot's declination more embarrassing, if not more uncertain. The Register published an announcement of his selection, which precipitated a flood of inquiries from members and friends. "The whole matter is annoying," Eliot confided to his wife. "I blame Wendte for not forestalling it and myself for not telegraphing Chris to head it off."[29] Letters of congratulation and exhortation came from such diverse places as LaPorte, Indiana, where a missionary agent of the Association lauded his selection as "best calculated to settle our little disturbance here in the west of all the men in the denomination" and trusted that no consideration would lead him to do otherwise than accept the appointment;[30] and from Magnolia, Massachusetts, where a Unitarian minister praised his selection as showing admirable wisdom in view of the perplexity of the Western Issue. Even beyond Eliot's familiarity with the vexed question, the latter writer averred, his accession to the position would impart confidence to the conservatives and aid the Association in its efforts to promote the cause of Pure Christianity in the West.[31] Such expressions of confidence and trust were hard to dismiss.

---

[26] Reynolds to TLE, July 12, 1887.

[27] Ibid., July 23, 1887.

[28] Wendte to TLE, July 27, 1887. Wendte told Eliot he would not urge him because he was too happy he declined.

Dismiss them Eliot did, however, because of what he considered the most compelling of reasons, his health. His apologia revealed the precariousness of his own ministry:

---

[29] TLE to HRE, July 22, 1887.

[30] A.G. Jennings to TLE, July 16, 1887.

[31] J. Cordner to TLE, July 23, 1887.

> It is with great difficulty and only by many shifts and indulgences that I have done anything as a minister. It has taken a world of adaptation and the life-long consecrated fellowship of my wife, to eke out a reasonable service. . . . A charge of the gravity of the appointment you contemplate for me would speedily destroy us both.

He was honored by the selection, he assured Reynolds, and flattered by "an overindulgent opinion of my work and abilities." But his decision was unalterable. His greatest disappointment was that Reynolds had not sought an earlier intimation of his mind.[32] The Secretary received Eliot's second refusal with regret too great to be written, because in it the Association "met a great loss."[33]

The Western Issue was finally resolved by accommodation from both sides at the National Conference of 1894, and without Eliot's act of self-destruction. What reasons other than his proffered explanation of health underlay his declination are not readily apparent. In general, however, Eliot believed that the creative energies of liberal Christians were more properly directed to the reform of the social structure than of the religious structure. Consequently, the choice between community and denomination was not open to debate; his decision for Oregon was, predictably, instant, impulsive and intuitive. He was quite right, Professor Joseph Henry Allen of Harvard asserted, "in declining to be bishop of the Louisiana purchase." Professor Allen had been quite wrong, however, in assuming that Eliot would "jump at anything which looked like a chance to bring [him] 2000 miles nearer" the Unitarian center.[34]

---

[32] TLE, draft to Reynolds, July 1887.

[33] Reynolds to TLE, July 30, 1887.

Several years later, Eliot declined a second opportunity for denominational service, this time as founder and president of a seminary. There was a growing sentiment among prominent Unitarians in northern California in favor of a Unitarian seminary at Berkeley. Horace Davis, President of the University of California, supported the idea, but the prime mover was Charles Wendte, who, as Superintendent, was most directly concerned with the problem of ministerial supply in the West. Not only was the quantity of men available from the Eastern theological schools at Cambridge and Meadville, Pennsylvania, inadequate, but the quality of the institution at Meadville was, in his estimation, substandard. "I look upon the one year I passed there as the bleakest of my life," Wendte wrote to Eliot, warning that further endowment of Meadville would be a grievous mistake.[35]

---

[34] Joseph H. Allen to TLE, April 27, 1889. Several months after he refused the position for which nearly everyone had told him he was superbly equipped, Eliot received yet another request for advice from Jasper Douthit, the conservative protagonist from rural Illinois. His reply to Douthit suggests utter weariness with the issue. "Am too far away to give advice. We of the Coast know 'nothing' of the Western Issue and cannot share the heart of those who are directly in it. It is very hard to avoid personalities at such a time, and I hope those concerned in it will soon feel how provisional words are compared to the issues underlying them." TLE to J. Douthit, December 12, 1887.

As he pressed upon his colleagues the idea of a new institution at Berkeley, Wendte urged Eliot to head it up. "Every institution is but the lengthened shadow of some man," he suggested, hoping that the words of Emerson might spark Eliot's interest in the creative possibilities of the venture. His leadership would gain the confidence of the denomination, give the school a wise direction, and offer to Eliot personally "a noble mission to end and round [his] life with." Thinking of Eliot's well-established position in Portland and his comfortable retreat at Hood River, Wendte conjured up the vision of an equally pleasant life in a little Berkeley paradise with "twenty useful and happy years for yourself and wife." If he would not consider the presidency, Eliot might perhaps accept the position of dean and professor of homiletics and pastoral care.[36]

---

[35] Wendte to TLE, October 14, 1890.

[36] *Ibid.*, October 23, 1889.

"I beg you not to assume too much or too fast," replied Eliot, rebuffing Wendte's presumption as testily as he had Secretary Reynold's two years before. It would be neither right nor wise for the Superintendent to even consider him at the present stage of affairs. "You will kindly recall," Eliot reminded the Superintendent, "that my imperative reason for stopping parish work--if it is to stop--is to get rest and an entire change of venue." His own sympathy for the proposed school was undisputed, and his proposal for the institution at the recent National Conference had been effective enough to secure a unanimous endorsement for the project.[37] But for the time being Eliot wished to keep clear of any new responsibilities.

To Wendte, however, the successful conversion of a resolution into an institution depended upon Eliot's willingness to lead. There were several difficulties which he believed Eliot was best able to surmount. One was the opposition of Horatio Stebbins, who demurred on a number of grounds.[38] Financially, Stebbins felt, the Association would be hard pressed to meet its commitments to the existing schools. Let theological candidates from the Coast, if they cannot afford to go to Cambridge or Meadville, "attend an orthodox school and we will furnish them side teaching," Stebbins suggested. Such a policy would not only effect a considerable financial saving, it would also bear some ecumenical fruit. If the Unitarians could turn out two men a year from a Presbyterian school, "it would be one of the most influential things ever done in the way of liberalizing and enlightening religious thought."[39] Stebbins's opposition was not easily dismissed, and Wendte, even with the strong support of Horace Davis, was loath to proceed without the leadership of Eliot.[40]

---

[37] TLE to Wendte, November 2, 1889; Crompton, Unitarianism, 128.

[38] Wendte to TLE, November 25, 1889.

A second difficulty lay in the relationship between the proposed school and the University of California, whose president, Horace Davis, was a leading Unitarian layman. Davis favored a close relationship between the schools, Wendte reported, as did Professor Allen of Harvard. He himself was uncertain, however, chiefly because "ecclesiastics and bigots" had already branded the University as godless and continued to harass the Unitarian regents and president and liberal professors. For the Unitarians to be the first denomination to establish a theological school under the very eaves of the college would certainly, he felt, "call out a storm of zealotic indignation." His own recommendation was either to establish the seminary temporarily at Oakland, with the option of moving later to Berkeley, or to establish a congregation at Berkeley which could shelter the seminary for the time being. In any case, strong and wise leadership was essential.[41]

---

[39] Stebbins to TLE, December 9, 1889.

[40] Wendte to TLE, December 6, 1889.

Eliot once again refused to leave Portland for an influential position in the denomination. The state of his health was, as he told Wendte, a prime consideration, while Stebbins's opposition was also a factor. Three successive candidates for the presidency followed Eliot's precedent by declining the post. William F. Fenn of Pittsfield, Massachusetts, weighed the same factors and opted for the First Unitarian Church of Chicago; Edward Everett Hale and William Alger, brother of Horatio Alger, declined in turn because, as one interpreter put it, "each loved the 'neighborhood of Boston' too much to consider removing from it."[42] The momentum was lost, and the tide of events prevented the official establishment of the school until 1906, when Earl Morse Wilbur, Eliot's son-in-law and successor in Portland, assumed the leadership. By then Eliot, who also declined to serve as President of Meadville Theological Seminary in 1890, had another school on his hands.[43]

---

[41] Ibid., November 25, 1889.

[42] Crompton, Unitarianism, 128-139.

Although he declined the three calls that would have required him to leave Portland, Eliot was generally ready to accept denominational responsibilities that demanded no move on his part. During two periods, particularly, Eliot was unofficial agent for the Association. Before the appointment of Charles Wendte he served as Unitarian "overseer" for the Northwest and assented graciously to Secretary Reynold's request for recommendations and reports. Even after Wendte assumed his position, the Association continued to rely primarily upon Eliot for word of its work in the Northwest.[44]

---

[43] C. A. Staples to TLE, June 20, 1890. The call from Meadville offered the same reasons for Eliot's selection as the earlier invitation: his youth, experience as a missionary and, above all, his ability to draw the support of the various Unitarian elements. By 1891, neither Wendte nor Eliot were longer willing to press the issue of the school at Berkeley, though for different reasons. Eliot feared Stebbins's opposition, while Wendte indicated that Stebbins's disapproval "does not count a feathersweight with me and ought not to with you--for he is manifestly wrong and his motive is not a noble one." Wendte to TLE, February 11, 1891.

[44] Reynolds to TLE, October 1, 1884; TLE to Reynolds, n.d.

After Charles Wendte's resignation as Superintendent in 1896, the Association, for reasons of financial stringency, decided not to replace him, or continue to sustain several other regional superintendents and asked Eliot to serve as its "bishop in partibus" for the duration of the depression. It was a semi-formal arrangement, requiring an annual tour of Unitarian churches in Oregon and Washington, for which he received only his traveling expenses. Again Eliot accepted the responsibility willingly and served till the appointment of George Stone in 1900.[45]

A second major contribution to Unitarianism was Eliot's role in the establishment of the Pacific Coast Conference. His Society played host to the first formal meeting of West Coast Unitarians in connection with the dedicatory activities of his new church building in June 1879. The five ministers present--Eliot, Stebbins, Utter, Galvin and W. W. McKaig of Marysville, California, --were the entire corps of Unitarian clergy on the coast. They, together with laymen from the various societies, discussed papers on such diverse subjects as philanthropy, education, race, labor, evolution, Sunday schools, missionary techniques, comparative religion, temperance, socialism and Chinese immigration. Although no permanent organization took shape as the immediate result of the conference, there did come out of the meetings a sense of need for some sort of structure and centralized direction if liberal Christians were going to make an impact on the Pacific Coast.[46]

---

[45] George Batchelor to TLE, June 29, 1896. On Stone, see Pacific Unitarian, VIII (September 1900), 321-23.

The Unitarians eventually organized the Pacific Coast Conference of Unitarian and other Christian Churches (1885), and Eliot was a director from the beginning. From 1890 until 1899 he also served as a director of the American Unitarian Association. In this latter position his contributions were heavily inspirational. For example, when Secretary Reynolds of the Association requested him to come to Boston in 1890 for important meetings relating to the Pacific Coast, Eliot begged to be excused, volunteering to send by letter any information the Association desired. Reynolds replied that they desired Eliot's person as much as his proposals and suggested that if directors of the various conferences had confronted each other fifteen years previously, there would have been no Western Issue. "The work of the Association," Reynolds concluded, "is quite as much dependent upon life and sympathy as upon word and fact, and we want one meeting when we shall have the very breath of the Pacific Coast with us."[47]

---

[46] *Oregonian*, June 9, 10 and 11, 1879; Crompton, *Unitarianism*, 82-83.

In 1875, Eliot became a missionary for the Society for Propagating the Gospel Among the Indians and Others in North America. The circumstances of his appointment were somewhat unusual, however. In the summer of 1874 William Eliot, assuming that his son needed additional income, suggested to Secretary Shippen that the Association subsidize him for work beyond the immediate service of the Portland congregation. Shippen commented favorably on the recommendation, commending the younger Eliot's "self-sacrificing zeal and missionary spirit."[48] Several months later, the appointment was confirmed.[49]

Thomas Eliot was not particularly grateful for the paternal solicitude and told his father so. In the weeks that followed, William Eliot was hard pressed to convince his son that his work in Oregon justified acceptance of the funds. He might preach, lecture, or distribute tracts in outlying communities, or visit institutions to earn the stipend, and the whole Portland work, for that matter, might qualify as "Propagandism."[50] Eliot still was not convinced, and his father wrote furiously to overcome the filial scruples:

---

[47] Reynolds to TLE, September 20 and October 4, 1890.

[48] Rush R. Shippen to William G. Eliot, August 4, 1874, WGE.

[49] William G. Eliot, Notebook 8, 99, WGE.

> If it troubles your conscience, I would not touch it, or only so far as fairly earned . . . it should be a matter of clear understanding with the Soc. Prop. that you are doing more or less the same service at any rate and increase it as far as you can in their employ; . . . also that as an outpost 'in partibus infidelium' you come very nearly under the rules . . . . If you please, put it into church fund or whatever else as your contribution. . . . But if it annoys you or if the condition of things and men is such as to make what worked well here troublesome there, why, cut it off or hand it over to Utter in whole or in part. Do not let it worry you.[51]

Eliot accepted the appointment and served the Society as missionary for thirty years.[52] He also served the Association as its special representative to Japan in 1903.[53]

On his own shore, Eliot was a breath of life and the symbol of hope to a cause that was often embattled and embittered. However beset by depression relating to his health, Society or missionary enterprises, he usually managed to spur on his flagging brethren to second efforts by personal letters or challenging sermons. Horatio Stebbins, for one, admitted to a large dependence on Eliot's encouraging words. His colleagues frequently honored Eliot by requesting him to preach the Conference Sermon, something of a keynote address. Soon after the Conference established the Pacific Unitarian as its official organ (October 1892), Eliot began to contribute sermons, articles and correspondence. Charles Murdock, editor of the periodical, eagerly solicited Eliot's contributions because the Portlander was not afraid of being religious. "As you present it," Murdock wrote him, "Unitarianism is a religion. With some of our preachers, it seems to be thought an escape from it."[54] In an open letter to Murdock, during the dark days of dying societies and dwindling resources, Eliot expressed his deep love for his denomination as well as his impression of the role he saw it playing in the world. The "bishop in partibus" said, in part:

---

[50] William G. Eliot to TLE, January 6, 1875, WGE.

[51] Ibid., February 16, 1875.

[52] See Chapter VII below.

[53] See Chapter X below.

> If ever there were martyrs, our faithful witnesses either in churches or as isolated members are worthy of that name and crown. It is a standing wonder that in any community a church of our name survives the combined prejudice, freezing out and direct attacks of all the other

---

[54] Charles Murdock to TLE, March 11, 1892.

> churches. There is an underground, persistent slurring and misrepresentation, even harder to bear . . . . Survival itself is victory . . . . I wonder at the strength and beauty of the Unitarian church anywhere, in view of the superior numbers, wealth, discipline and zeal of the Evangelical hosts, combined, as they tacitly or openly are, to resist us.[55]

When Eliot spoke publicly of his church, it was in the major key, as he liked to say, and more than any of his cohorts on the Pacific Coast, he spoke the sustaining word often and effectively.

The point of personal philosophy that more than any other determined Eliot's life style was the conviction that influence derives from permanence, that impact and effectiveness are cumulative and directly proportional to the length of time one is ready to invest in a program or locale. This conviction reflected a deep respect for the value of social roots at a time when American society in general and the Unitarian clergy of the West in particular had seemingly opted for mobility. It was this high regard for stability that enabled Eliot to become the leading advocate of the American Unitarian Association in the West while prompting him to refuse, paradoxically, positions of influence in the denomination. It was the paternal value, often enunciated, that Eliot received most willingly and emulated most faithfully. It was also the characteristic of Eliot's ministry that differentiated him most sharply from the other Unitarian clergy of the Pacific Coast and enabled the First Unitarian Society of Portland to enjoy a tranquility and social influence unequaled by any Unitarian society west of the Mississippi River. It was, finally, the factor that enabled Eliot to reach out more and more into the life of the community and, ultimately, cut loose entirely from his parochial base to crusade for civic righteousness. In no arena of public service did his deepening roots and family tradition assure him of greater influence than in the field of education.

---

[55] TLE to Murdock, Pacific Unitarian, IV (November 1895), 7-8. Eliot wrote in the same vein to President Charles H. Chapman of the University of Oregon, who, beset by dissension and criticism at the University, had asked Eliot what it required to enter the Unitarian ministry. In his second reply to Chapman, Eliot said: "The Unitarian ministry is a martyrdom, almost an inglorious one. It affects me deeply to know that you are considering it as a vocation . . . . I shall beg you to weigh the matter in many scales and use your own clear judgment above all and more than all others, for at the best the cause has little to offer and demands entire consecration and many sacrifices." TLE to Charles H. Chapman, August 27, 1897 and n.d., 1897.

CHAPTER VI

THE IDEALIST AS EDUCATOR

> Our American salvation must come through public school and social education.
>
> William G. Eliot to Thomas Lamb Eliot,
> October 4, 1876

It was natural that Thomas Lamb Eliot should take a deep interest in education in Oregon. He concurred in his father's view that enlightenment of the mind was a necessary condition for the spiritual growth of individuals, that public education was a necessary prerequisite for the moral elevation of society, and that the "safety" of American civilization depended on the success of cultural missionaries in "translating the best institutions of the older states to the more fertile soil of the West, where distinctively American ideas must ultimately have their freest development."[1] Eliot became one of those missionaries to the West who, according to David Tyack, "accepted the founding and superintendency of schools as a traditional religious duty" and who believed that his native New England should be "pattern states" for the Pacific Slope.[2] His chief contributions to education in Oregon before 1905 were as superintendent of schools for Multnomah County (1872-1876) and as advocate of social education for the general public.

---

[1] William G. Eliot, Washington University Twenty-fifth Anniversary Address (St. Louis, 1882), 23.

On June 3, 1872, the voters of Multnomah County selected Eliot as their school superintendent to succeed George Henry Atkinson. "Folks all glad and joking over my successful election," he wrote his wife after the uncontested victory.[3] The only possible humor for Eliot had been the method of his nomination; friends had placed his name on the Republican ticket without his knowledge and while he was out of town.[4] The responsibilities of the office were extensive and demanded a larger share of his life than the conscientious minister was free to give. Although he accepted a bipartisan renomination for a second term, he was unenthusiastic about it. "The only good I know from it," he told Etta, " is that it will give me my $1,000 for the new church."[5] Eliot wrote in the same vein to State Superintendent L. L. Rowland when he submitted his resignation in the spring of 1876:

---

[2] David Tyack, "The Kingdom of God and the Common School," Harvard Educational Review, XXXVI (Fall, 1966), 447, 456.

[3] TLE to HRE, June 6, 1872.

[4] Wilbur, Eliot, 42.

> The position is not an easy one, and at times involves a burden of responsibility hard to sustain. Much of the work is petty and vexatious, and yet upon it depends the value of whatever is done. . . . I shall leave the office with but one regret, that the limits of time and duty (not of interest) have prevented me from doing more.[6]

Eliot was fortunate in having had George Atkinson as a predecessor.[7] In spite of their theological differences, the two ministers shared very similar educational philosophies. Both men advocated professional training for teachers and discipline for the students; both opposed haphazard curricula, miscellaneous textbooks, irregularity in attendance, rough and unattractive buildings, unruly behavior and ungraded schools;[8] both men considered reform to be the substitution of system for chaos and the standardization of all aspects of the educational process;[9] both were "educational strategists," as David Tyack has termed them, who saw the schools as "only part of a total process of socialization and civilization and . . . [who] worked as well to establish libraries, churches, colleges and a host of other stabilizing institutions and associations";[10] and both men looked eastward for patterns, models and incentives in their educational work. In his historical sketch of the county school system, Eliot applauded the work of his "able predecessor" and listed Atkinson's patient attention and great wisdom as crucial factors in creating the distinguishing excellence of the schools of the county.[11]

---

[5] TLE to HRE, July 1874 (?). Eliot gave his superintendent's salary of $500 to his Society. He informed the Multnomah County Republican Convention that he would be happy "to forward any plan to make the superintendency non-partisan, by the whole people, solely on the score of ability and fitness for the work." He was prepared to accept their nomination "if tendered to me not as one of a party or not of a party, but as a man and as an expression of your desire to place political distinctions to one side for the sake of the cause of education." TLE to Multnomah County Republican Convention, May 1, 1874.

[6] TLE to L. L. Rowland, March 1876.

[7] Atkinson's predecessors, including a Baptist minister, a Methodist minister, a printer and a lawyer, had done little to delineate the duties or establish the prestige of the part-time office. One superintendent, J. J. Hoffman, was elected on the strength of his being "a good Union man" in contrast to his predecessor, who was a secessionist. See Alfred Powers and Howard McKinley Corning (eds.), "History of Education in Portland " (W. P. A. Adult Education Project typescript, 1937), 312-319.

---

[8] These were widespread attitudes among Eastern educators of Horace Mann's generation, as David Tyack suggests in his article "Bureaucracy and the Common School: The Example of Portland, Oregon, 1851-1913," American Quarterly, XIX (Fall, 1967), 477.

[9] Ibid. Tyack suggests that the laudable innovations of Atkinson and Eliot, the "architects" of the Portland school system, hardened into a rigid and mechanical system among their successors. Ibid., 475-498.

[10] Ibid., 483.

While he advocated policies along the same general lines that Atkinson had delineated, Eliot placed special stress on the character and competence of teachers. "The Teacher Everything,"[12] Eliot noted on the margin of his first report, and the record of his administration reflected the high priority he assigned to the human element in the learning process. "A good teacher, with a high ideal, with strong moral and spiritual endowment, an analytic and productive mind and magnetic power, possessing tact, enthusiasm and resource," he affirmed, "is a force in the community of incalculable worth."[13]

---

[11] TLE, "History of the Public Schools of Multnomah County," Oregonian, March 7, 1876. On Atkinson's educational work, see also: Nancy Atkinson, Biography, 184-187, 229-255; George Atkinson, "Early History of the Public School System of Oregon with a General Outline of its Legal Aspects " (typescript, n.d.); Powers and Corning, "History," 29-40, 318-319. Atkinson differed most markedly from Eliot in advocating the use of the Bible in public schools. He concluded an address to the National Education Association, for example, with the words, "The Bible our Textbook." Cited in Nancy Atkinson, Biography, 229-239.

[12] TLE, "Notes for Semi-Annual Report," January 1873.

Rigorous examinations, graded certificates and careful supervision were necessary, Eliot believed, to insure the presence of only the most fit persons in the classroom. "The disposition to pick up the first person who comes to hand who can manage to obtain a certificate . . . is cruelty to children," he asserted.[14] He believed that teachers ought to regard themselves as professionals and use every available means--conferences, institutes, journals--for their self-advancement. The districts, for their part, ought to treat teachers professionally ("the way some districts peck the life out of their educational servants is enough to kill his influence twice over") and pay them accordingly ("of all the wretched economies are cheap seed and cheap teachers ").[15]

Soon after taking office, Eliot announced his intention of carefully scrutinizing the corps of teachers. He notified the directors of each of the thirty-one school districts in Multnomah County that he was planning to visit their classrooms chiefly for the purpose of critically evaluating each teacher. No matter what type of credential a person held or how well an applicant had performed on the written examination, no teacher would receive more than a three-month certificate until Eliot had visited his classroom, judged the quality of his discipline and methodology and rated the person as a practical teacher; full certification would follow only at the discretion of the superintendent.[16] It was an arduous chore that the superintendent had assigned himself, and not always a pleasant one. Rejected applicants, especially, found the superintendent exacting if not arbitrary, and their criticisms were not always easy to bear.[17]

---

[13] Ibid.

[14] TLE, "Report of the County School Superintendent for 1875" (hereinafter, "Report"), Oregonian, March 15, 1875.

[15] Ibid., 1874, Oregonian, March 14, 1874.

Eliot spent at least two full days each week on school business, particularly in the visitation of classrooms. He reported 241 such inspections in 1875-76 alone, and he was occasionally on the road for as long as a week at a time. Alone, or with his son "Willy," he bumped over country roads to view classrooms and counsel teachers. His impressions of schools and teachers, itemized for his annual reports and presented to the public via the *Oregonian*, were candid and direct. In 1875, for example, he admonished District 7 for failing to build a better building: "self respect requires a new school house," he stated, "and the failure for another year to . . . build another building will arouse a strong suspicion of want of common sense. Neighbors, sink every interest in comparison with that of your children." He chided District 13 for "having managed to hold a little school in time to draw money this year." He commended the teacher of District 16 for doing "what we wish more teachers would do; when he wants an improvement, or map, or better playground, or blackboard, he handles a saw or hatchet or heads a subscription list himself, and keeps the good will of everybody." District 17 had a "first-class teacher and is therefore nearly a first-class school. A good teacher can say with Louis XIV of France, 'I am the State.'"[18]

---

[16] TLE, draft "to the School Directors of School Districts in Multnomah County," July 5, 1872.

[17] A Mrs. Crandall complained that Eliot had been "exacting with me and indulgent toward others" because he had allegedly allowed other applicants to take the examination questions home with them. She failed the examination twice and believed herself a victim of "some prejudice" that Eliot harbored toward her. Mrs. A.C. Crandall to TLE, August 1, 1872.

---

[18] TLE, "Report," 1875.

In evaluating facilities, attendance and school support--as well as teachers--Eliot tended to measure the performance of his system against that of several Eastern cities. In 1873 he reported that Portland had spent $20.28 per pupil in 1873 compared to Boston's $19.63 in 1871. "It will thus appear that we have reached the Eastern standards, at least in our expenditures for school purposes, and every citizen will take pride in the fact, with the conclusion it suggests," he asserted. Two years later (1875) Portland had expended $18 per student ($13.50 for all of Multnomah County) compared with $22 for Boston. Another standard of comparison was the number of districts that held at least two terms (six months) of school each year. In 1873, fourteen of the twenty-three reporting districts of Multnomah County indicated they had held at least two terms; in 1875, all but three of thirty-three districts had raised the standard to six months, not infrequently over vigorous opposition.[19] One of the principal purposes of Eliot's trip to St. Louis and New England in 1874 was to gather information on non-quantitative educational standards.

---

[19] TLE, "Reports," 1873, Oregonian, March 15, 1873 and 1875. See also Mrs. M.B. Virgil to TLE, November 23, 1873. Mrs. Virgil notified Eliot that she left her position in one district because of residents who felt "three months school in a year ample" and who would if they could "rule out free speech, free thought and free schools."

His trip to the East was a tonic in many ways. "I could not have dreamed of such full and happy results as my Eastern trip has realized," Eliot wrote his wife as he returned west. Not the least of his accomplishments was a survey of education "embracing a careful review of five great cities and actual visits to over two hundred rooms."[20] The strength of his impressions was evident throughout his report for 1875.

Eliot reserved his most enthusiastic endorsements for the new dignity of the teaching profession and the philosophy of the "new education." The time is coming, he reported, when one will no more be permitted to "pick up" teaching than he will be permitted to "pick up" law or medicine; it is a profession to be gained constructively in training schools and by disciplining experience. In this respect, Oregon's lack of a distinctive normal school placed her in "solitary grandeur" among the Northern states, and the state, he advised, should move immediately to erect the key-stone of the school arch. The rising status of teachers was, on the other hand, only part of a general reevaluation of teaching itself. It would be hard for a teacher of the old line to understand it, Eliot suggested, but he had found that everywhere and in all the schools he visited the formal discipline of rules had given way to self-control in motivating conduct, and the product of new classrooms was "a self-governing being, not a being to be governed by others." The old education was aggressive, or hydraulic as Eliot termed it, in the sense that a teacher had to be able to "lick his weight in school boys three times over" or commence his instruction with a "whipping all round" to impress his charges. The new education, he continued was "cooperative and organic and follow[ed] nature's methods of development." Especially in the primary grades, where Eliot had observed the most radical changes since the days of his own schooling, the need for professional teachers was great. The chief task of the primary teacher, he suggested was to create an atmosphere "of the sunshine of enthusiasm . . . of beauty and love . . . in the unspoiled hearts and minds of young children."[21]

---

[20] TLE to HRE, October 31, 1874.

Contact with Eastern educators caused Eliot to rethink his position on a number of other issues. He had endorsed compulsory attendance in 1873 as the "most obvious safe and needed reform of the day" because the self-protection of society made it imperative to abate ignorance, especially among the "idle, vicious and iliterate" classes who refused to attend school."[22] After 1874, Eliot regarded compulsory attendance as incompatible with his educational philosophy. Only in Europe, he declared, where populations were crowded and severe social remedies were needed did compulsion seem appropriate. In the United States, such an imposition of education by force would be wrong for several reasons: government should never force when it could possibly allure; compulsion had met with "doubtful results . . . in most of the states where it has been tried"; and "the larger the voluntary principle in a state, the more likely [were] its institutions to be maintained and grow in a normal way." Schools should attract rather than society compel.[23]

---

[21] TLE, "Report," 1875.

The same tendencies toward liberalization were also evident in Eliot's new concept of the curriculum. He had formerly advocated a restricted core of elementary knowledged centered about mental arithmetic (especially valuable for its "brain-building" qualities, Eliot had believed), but in 1875 he was heartily recommending phonetic instruction, drawing and vocal music as worthy additions to the course of instruction. "There should be granted considerable freedom as to methods and the individuality of the teacher and pupil," he added.[24]

---

[22] TLE, "Report," 1873. The issue of compulsory attendance had been heatedly debated since 1869 and was destined to be a lively issue for some time. See Powers and Corning, "History," 37-38.

[23] TLE, "Report," 1875.

During his tenure as superintendent of schools, Eliot was reluctantly drawn into two unpleasant controversies. One, the Giltner affair, was enigmatic throughout; the other, relating to Samuel King, clearly touched on matters of fundamental educational policy.

Dr. Jacob S. Giltner was one of three elected directors of School District Number One (Portland), the most populous district in Multnomah County. Six months after Eliot took office, Giltner allegedly challenged the credentials of two teachers whom the superintendent had licensed. Subsequently, as the Oregonian charged, the director behaved "in a manner so shockingly coarse and violent as to make all his previous indecencies appear the height of propriety."[25] The paper also quoted Eliot as saying that

---

[24] TLE, "Reports," 1873 and 1875.

[25] Oregonian, January 8, 1873. See also ibid., January 8, 9, 11 and 13, 1873.

"throughout his official duties in connection with the city's schools, Giltner's conduct had been a source of continual annoyance to him" and that the director had interfered in a "coarse and offensive manner." For several periods during the winter and spring of 1873, the Oregonian did its best to make the affair a major political issue, accusing Giltner of being a "pensioner upon the ring" and of using his position to plunder the revenues of the district.[26] Whatever the truth, or the exact nature, of the charges against Giltner, the matter was, as Thomas H. Crawford interpreted it, a very humiliating episode for Eliot.[27]

A dispute over the policies of Samuel Willard King followed shortly after the controversy with Giltner. Because Eliot had found it impossible during his first year to supervise adequately both the rural schools and the classrooms of Portland, he persuaded the board of directors (augmented through the election of his friend, Captain John Ainsworth) to engage a city superintendent. A native of Vermont and a Unitarian, King was to give special attention to the city schools each morning and instruct at the High School each afternoon. It appeared to be a good arrangement and one that would allow Eliot more time for the rural schools. Unfortunately, King himself became a subject of controversy. In the fall of 1874, he inaugurated a system of semi-annual examinations to determine promotions. By publishing each student's grades, however, King touched off a frenzy of competition both among the students and among their teachers, the more so because the superintendent chose to regard the percentage of promotions as a measure of the teacher's competence. A scramble to make a good showing ensued. Cramming and bitter animosities were not the worst of the side effects; more serious were the attempts to counsel slower students out of school and place newcomers a grade below their actual standing to improve a teacher's performance. The examinations became so important that the directors asked George Atkinson, an impartial educational expert, to administer them.[28]

---

[26] Ibid., January 9, April 7 and 8, 1873.

[27] T.H. Crawford to TLE, November 7, 1872 and January 9, 1873. Crawford termed Giltner an "incubus," and a "scamp who is a disgrace to any community." The Oregonian never mentioned specific charges against Giltner. Joseph Gaston portrayed him as "kind and benevolent," a person of whom "it would be impossible to find one who had ought to say against him." Joseph Gaston, "Jacob S. Giltner, M.D.," in Portland, Oregon, III, 561-564.

---

[28] Powers and Corning, "History," 270-271; 325-327; Lee Dillon, "Public Schools of Portland, Oregon, from 1877-1882" (typescript, n. d.) 16-18. Dillon cites the reports of King's successor, T. H. Crawford, which were critical of the examinations.

Eliot was in an awkward position; while he appreciated the need for an orderly system of evaluations and promotions, he was not happy with the widespread criticism that King's policies provoked. In his report of 1874, he defended the examinations as a step toward achieving uniformity among the city's schools. The tests themselves, he felt, were a valuable incentive for learning in that students could no longer "drop by gravitation" into an advanced grade. In his judgment, the requirements were within the reach of all and the tests were impartially administered. He asked restraint from both press and public in making hasty criticisms of teachers and directors; education was too important to be subjected to "rash and uncalled for comment." He would welcome, he assured the public, any suggestions for improvement that were not anonymous.[29]

A year later, after his pedagogical Aufklärung in the East, Eliot seemed less willing to endorse his associate's policies unqualifiedly. While he acknowledged that periodic accountability worked a moral influence on the young, that the large numbers of students in the district required a system, and that King's work was in the right direction, he also warned that individuality could easily be sacrificed and machine work take "the place of the production of thinking power."[30] The collective outcries of numerous parents finally forced King's resignation in 1877, a year after Eliot had departed from his position with Multnomah County.[31]

---

[29] TLE, "Report," 1874.

From the multitude of visitations that he made, the reports he prepared, the addresses he delivered, the controversies he resolved and the business he dispatched, three distinct contributions emerge as Eliot's legacy to education in Oregon.

He first of all helped to extend the administrative procedures initiated by Atkinson. Besides the examination, certification and supervision of all the teachers in the county, this aspect of his work imposed numerous routine duties, all of which Eliot conscientiously performed. Not the least of these was the preparation of his annual reports, for which he depended in part upon the help and cooperation of more than thirty district clerks. It annoyed Eliot that these officials, many of whom received multiples of his own salary, were so indifferent to their responsibilities. Time and again he lectured them about faithful performance of their duties, but to little avail. In spite of the clerks' inertia, however, Eliot was able to assemble fairly comprehensive statistical reports for each district. These included an accounting of voters, eligible children, enrolled children, attendances, quarters of instruction, funds, taxes, salaries, property values, furnishings and cash balances. For each district, as well as for the county as a whole, he submitted summaries of progress and needs together with his own recommendations. Eliot offered more than the law required, but improvement, he believed, depended upon the possession of accurate information.

---

[30] TLE, "Report," 1875.

[31] King, in David Tyack's estimation, was "a consummate bureaucrat" who acted on the assumption that children's behavior must be precisely controlled, reliable and predictable. Under King and his successor, Thomas Crawford, Portland's school system began the descent into formalism that reached a nadir by 1913. Tyack, "Bureaucracy," 483.

Eliot seems to have been a model among county superintendents, many of whom apparently paid little attention to the duties of their office. Sylvester Simpson, the first state superintendent, when he was not complaining about his own hard lot, complained about county superintendents who looked on their office as "an appendage to some other employment" and whose conduct "seemed to justify the popular notion that 'almost anybody can teach school.'"[32] Levi Lindsay Rowland, Simpson's successor, took a more philosophic view of his own office but despaired even more than Simpson over the inefficiency of many county superintendents. Most of their reports, he complained, were unintelligent, unscholarly documents; he could have obtained better information about their schools from the road supervisor. Eliot was a shining exception, and Rowland commended him publicly: "Would it not have a good effect to lay before the people, as Mr. Eliot has done in his county, the exact condition of every school, bestowing praise where it is due, and advising to better work where it is needed?" Privately, Rowland thanked Eliot for his exemplary reports, promised him a bound volume and wished others would perform as faithfully.[33]

---

[32] First Biennial Report of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction 1873-1874 (Salem, 1874), 32-48. Simpson referred to his office as a "most laborious and vexatious one" with "peculiar, difficult and invidious duties to perform." Ibid., 3-4. His post was a new one, created by the School Law of 1872. Before that year the county superintendents were virtually autonomous, though nominally under the direct supervision of the governor.

[33] Second Biennial Report of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction 1875-1876 (Salem, 1876), 40-42. Eliot and Rowland, who was an ordained minister of the Christian denomination, once spoke of exchanging pulpits. L. L. Rowland to TLE, March 9, 1876.

A second and less direct result of Eliot's work as superintendent related to the kinds of people Eliot attracted into service with him. During his tenure, a city superintendent and two new directors entered positions of influence. Two of the men were Unitarians and members of Eliot's congregation, and one (John Ainsworth) was a close friend with Unitarian sympathies. During a heated school controversy shortly after Eliot left office, writers of anonymous letters to the Oregonian intimated that the schools of Portland had become something of a Unitarian establishment.[34] Eliot himself gave credence to the view when he claimed during a presentation in St. Louis, "it has been mainly through Unitarian workers, superintendents and directors that our public school system has advanced to a front rank of efficiency and influence."[35]

There was friction between Eliot's friends and others in the system even before Eliot had left office. Director Amos Morgan and Superintendent King feuded constantly with Professor John W. Johnson, principal of the High School. When Johnson resigned in September 1876 to become the first president of the University of Oregon, Morgan claimed that Johnson had moved "simply because they made him a better offer than we was [sic] paying him." As the school election of 1877 approached, the smoldering factionalism erupted into what Morgan called the biggest fight the district had ever had. On one side were Eliot's friends--the directors and Samuel King--supporting the reelection of Amos Morgan; on the other were former High School Principal Johnson, Principal A. J. Anderson and others who endorsed the election of Benton Killin as director. The issues were King himself, his examinations, and the religious affiliations of leaders of the school administration. Anonymous letters to the Oregonian attacked the incumbents for incapacity and meddlesomeness, for "extravagant expenditures and peculation of the school money," and for "unjustifiable interferences with able and popular teachers." During the height of the fray, King resigned as city superintendent, a position the Oregonian happily proclaimed was "wholly unauthorized by law." The Anderson group pressed the attack, claiming that because Morgan and King were "indissolubly locked in interest" a vote for Morgan would bring back King, the "professed infidel" who had banned the use of religious or "Sunday-school" songs in the city's schools.[36]

---

[34] Oregonian, March 20, 1877.

[35] TLE, "Notes for Appeal for Funds," 1879.

---

[36] Oregonian, March 16, 20, 21, 27, 28, 29 and 31, 1877.

The electoral contest itself was spirited, and, as Morgan recounted it for Eliot, his opponents "almost raised Heaven and earth to secure their ends and resorted to the lowest trickery and villainy that I have heard in any political election." It was, to Morgan, clearly a case of virtue arrayed against vice. "The very best men of Portland were on my side and vice versa," Morgan claimed; Captain Ainsworth, also a recipient of strong criticism, "went into the the street with his pockets full of tickets in the morning and worked hard all day until the last vote was in." Morgan retained his seat (424 votes to 295 for Killin) and interpreted the margin of victory as an "utter defeat and route [sic] of the enemy and another glorious triumph for the public schools of Portland."[37] Thomas H. Crawford succeeded King as city superintendent and began almost at once to soften the rigors of his predecessor's system of examinations. As a good bureaucrat, however, Crawford perpetuated King's obsession for regular attendance and, according to Tyack, made Portland's pupils the most punctual in the nation.[38]

---

[37] Amos Morgan to TLE, April 11, 1877. King left public education to found a retail business with William P. Olds, also a Unitarian, and the firm of Olds and King came to be one of Portland's leading department stores.

[38] Tyack, "Bureaucracy," 483.

Eliot's most significant long-range contribution to education in Oregon was as advocate and articulator of the "new education." The naturalistic philosophy of the Swiss educator, Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, which had become widely popular in the East in the 1870s, impressed Eliot as the best theoretical approach to learning, and his discussions with Eastern educators in 1874 convinced him that Pestalozzi's ideas could work as well in Oregon as they had in Massachusetts or Missouri. The Swiss educator's dependence upon German idealism as a philosophical base, as well as his emphases upon nature, character and moral principles, were naturally congenial to a Unitarian minister whose theology inclined in the same directions. After 1875 especially, Eliot commended in his public statements the writings of Pestalozzi and William Torrey Harris, the Superintendent of Schools of St. Louis, a close friend of his father and one of the foremost exponents of Pestalozzianism in the United States. It was largely through Eliot (via Harris) that the educational ideas of Pestalozzi came into the schools of Oregon. In his reports of 1875 and 1876, and in his numerous addresses before educational groups, Eliot propagandized ardently for certain of Harris's adaptations of Pestalozzian theory, especially oral instruction, phonetics, music, foreign language--

particularly German--and education as preparation for life.[39]

Eliot was a zealous propagandist for nonsectarian schools during his terms of office and he remained an advocate of quality public education throughout his life. His "History of the Public Schools of Multnomah County," written shortly before his resignation from the superintendency, celebrated the triumph of free schools in characteristically moral terms. As he saw it, the struggle for public schools had been from the very first a contest of the far-sighted against the "Philistines," by whom he designated "bachelors, sectarians and some of the better classes" united in the common cause of self-interest. During the 1850s, Eliot suggested, the Philistines had prevailed, and the children of Multnomah County had escaped total ignorance only by some Darwinian process. During the 1860s, largely because of the heroic efforts of Josiah Failing and George Atkinson, the farsighted had been able to turn the tide and assure that by the 1870s Portland would have schools that ranked with the very best. The rural schools of the county had also made progress during the period, and Eliot lauded their unique social contributions in Turnerian prose:

---

[39] Harris was superintendent of schools in St. Louis from 1868-1880, subsequently a lecturer at Washington University and fourth United States Commissioner of Education. On Harris as a Pestalozzian, see Will S. Monroe, History of the Pestalozzian Movement in the United States (Syracuse, 1907), 195-202; on Harris's life, philosophy, career as an educator and friendship with William G. Eliot, see Kurt F. Leidecker, Yankee Teacher: The Life of William Torrey Harris (New York, 1946), especially 245-293, 388-397, and 518-521. William G. Eliot Jr., Thomas's son, brought Harris to Portland in 1905 to address the Lewis and Clark Educational Congress. On Harris's role in the secularization of American education, and also on his relation with John Dewey, see Neil G. McCluskey, S.J., Public Schools and Moral Education: The Influence of Horace Mann, William Torrey Harris and John Dewey (New York, 1958), especially 148-175. On the westward expansion of transcendentalism via Harris, see Henry A. Pochmann, New England Transcendentalism and St. Louis Hegelianism: Phases in the History of American Idealism (Philadelphia, 1948).

> Out of these solemn forests and from these farms comes the sinewy purpose whose presence brings health into the councils of state and the affairs of men. All honor to the country school, built of logs and rudely seated though it be! Our civilization has no finer emblem than it presents; and when the farmer ceases to thus labor for the sturdy individualization of his neighborhood, and sends his boys and girls "to town" for their schooling and manners," we may look for a measurable decay in the manhood and womanhood of the age.[40]

During the 1880s Eliot was in much demand as a speaker, and he used each appearance before teachers or graduates to reiterate, reapply or expand his educational ideas. In a baccalaureate sermon at Pacific University he dealt with what he believed to be a most dangerous and distressing tendency--the enlarging gulf between common and educated people. Repudiating elitism, paternalism and what he called "spiritual almsgiving" by the literati, he urged a spirit of service and ministry by both teachers and graduates so as to bridge the separation between the various educational strata of society and reaffirm the organic relation and sacramental bond uniting all humanity.[41]

---

[40] TLE, "History of the Public Schools of Multnomah County," Oregonian, March 7, 1876.

Certain major themes of his superintendency reappeared in addresses that Eliot delivered during the 1880s. The methodology of the "new education" continued to interest him, and he urged teachers at one institute to liberate the creative energies of their pupils. Scorning quantitative results even more vigorously than he had a decade before, and denouncing textbooks as a premium upon laziness and lax effort, he called for a "crusade against all the helpers that do not help but hinder independence. The supreme motive of the teacher's craft ought to be to "*inspire* the child and his methods, to have his work his own and not another's, his victories not vicarious ones, his measures of values and methods *ethical*." Let "systems, grades, helps, disciplines . . . be forever subordinated to life and living," he pleaded; not "what" is studied but "how" it is studied is the important thing in leading the learner to "self-directing habits and discipline." The "life relations of children," he concluded, "ought to be the great determinant of their education."[42]

---

[41] TLE, "And the Common People Heard Him Gladly," June 3, 1883.

Eliot also continued to emphasize personal character as the most important prerequisite for professional teachers. Disdaining "keepers of the rules" and "precisionists," he suggested that "entire consecration to the work" was the only acceptable preparation for teaching. Pointing to Pestalozzi as a preeminent example of a pedagogue who could not methodize but whose "sacred devotion to childhood . . . won a way to the tenderest mysteries and spiritual chemistry of the creative work in child-nature," he invited Oregon's teachers to cultivate the same devotion. Their real victories as teachers, he predicted, would be "of friendship, of love, of reverence," providing their dedication was genuine and not merely a show of "goody-goody tone" or "prating moralisms." Pupils would readily adopt the ideals of a worthy teacher and realize their own potential as the "likeness and prophecy of the Kingdom of

---

[42] TLE, "Proportion and Perspective in Education," December 29, 1884.

Heaven to come on earth."[43]

In February 1880, Harvey W. Scott, editor of the *Oregonian* and never a friend of public education, launched a journalistic attack against "flummery" in the public schools. It was the editor's way of expressing his disdain for the relatively sophisticated machinery that had superseded the primitive schools of his youth. The main task of defending the schools fell to George Atkinson, an assignment that David Tyack suggests was comparable to asking the Pope to study irregularities in the Vatican.[44] Eliot declined to serve on Atkinson's committee, but he defended the school system as the indispensable homogenizing agency by which a democracy unified itself and defended itself against "aristocracy and mobocracy (communism) and every other 'ocracy.'"[45] At the conclusion of an investigation that exonerated the system as it existed, Eliot presented resolutions thanking the committee for its work.[46]

---

[43] TLE, "The Teacher in the Realm of Character," December 28, 1887.

[44] Tyack, "Bureaucracy," 488-491. See also Lee Dillon, "Public Schools of Portland," 13-23; Powers and Corning, "History," 278-279; and, for Scott's viewpoints, Lee M. Nash, "Refining a Frontier," 143-155. In 1872, the *Oregonian* had warned Eliot and the school directors "not to attempt any radical change, or to try to transplant from another state an entirely new school system." *Oregonian*, August 10, 1872. In 1880, an article in *West Shore* advised Oregonians to preserve the "Western caste" in its institutions by preserving the schools of the state from the "straight-laced, sectarian methods that invariably obtain in the older states of our Union" and from the "incursions of Eastern heterodoxy." "Portland Public Schools," *West Shore*, VI (June 1880), 160-164.

Almost all of Eliot's early educational service was concerned with formal aspects of the work among youth. In 1880, he organized a series of six social science lectures, partly as an effort in adult education, partly to balance Portland's "assured material prosperity" with corresponding cultural achievements. The series became an annual feature for the next eight years, and subjects of these lectures ranged over a wide variety of topics--ethnology, jurisprudence, politics and government, the Australian ballot, civil service reform, economics, popular science, public health, poverty, intemperance, the insane, child welfare, education, commerce, religion, literature, art and kindergartens.[47] Lecturers included local personalities such as Abigail Scott Duniway, Eva Emery Dye and Rabbi Stephen Wise, but Eliot particularly enjoyed the opportunity to import colorful national celebrities like John Fiske, Julia Ward Howe, and other "eastern splendours," as Horatio Stebbins called them.[48] Several series of lectures by John Fiske were of special interest to Eliot. John Fiske had become University Professor of American History at Washington University in 1884, and Eliot, who had heard him speak in St. Louis on several occasions, determined to bring him to Oregon. Fiske declined the first invitations in 1884, but he finally agreed to come to Portland in the spring of 1887.[49] Only after nine months of delicate negotiations concerning financial arrangements and the subject matter of his lectures was his appearance a certainty.

---

[45] Oregonian, February 25, 1880.

[46] Ibid., July 13, 1880.

[47] Wilbur, Eliot, 58. Eliot promoted the kindergarten movement in Oregon. He invited Mrs. Sarah B. Cooper, who had sponsored kindergartens in San Francisco to speak on that subject in one of the social science lectures, supported the Portland Free Kindergarten Association after it was founded in the fall of 1884, and corresponded with Kate Douglas Wiggin about placing her "disciples" in Oregon. See Wilbur, Eliot, 65; Kate D. Wiggin to TLE, May 10, 1888 (?);

Eliot readily assented to Fiske's fee schedule, and that proved to be the lesser of two problems. The historian had initially asked

---

Doyce B. Nunis Jr., "Kate Douglas Wiggin: Pioneer in California Kindergarten Education," California Historical Society Quarterly, XLI (December 1962), 291 ff.

[48] Stebbins to TLE, May 6, 1892.

[49] John Fiske to TLE, July 2, 1884; February 7, 1887; TLE to Fiske, September 17, 1885.

for a guarantee of $1, 300 above traveling expenses, but he eventually pared that down to $500 and a guarantee of all receipts above expenses. "The more I can clear," he told Eliot, "the better I can push along my historical work. In a certain sense every penny I earn goes into history."[50] Eliot quickly began to raise the guarantee by circulating a subscription list among his friends.

Disagreement over the proposed content of Fiske's lectures nearly disrupted the plans altogether. The historian had proposed thirteen lectures on the American Revolution, six on the beginnings of New England and four on the Western campaigns of the Civil War. Eliot assented to the lectures on the Civil War, but he asked Fiske to substitute eight lectures on the "Critical Period" for those on the Revolution. He requested also that Fiske deliver a Memorial Day address and preach at least one sermon from his pulpit. During the ensuing exchange of correspondence Fiske became quite obviously annoyed with Eliot's requests. It was inadvisable, he declared, to delete a course that was "favorably received everywhere" in favor of lectures that were nearly all in print. As for the Memorial Day address, he would "go out of [his] way a hundred miles to avoid giving an occasional address," or an after-dinner speech. He would be willing to preach for Eliot, however, on condition he be given two full days of leisure to prepare his sermon. He never delivered anything, he asserted, that he had not written out in full.[51]

---

[50] Fiske to TLE, February 7 and 19, 1887.

Eliot conceded on all points except for the lectures on the Revolution, which he still wanted Fiske to omit. The historian was clearly distressed at that prospect:

> By omitting afternoon lectures, you omit the lectures called "Story of the Revolution," which are incomparably more interesting and popular than those you have selected. It is truly a gigantic mistake. The course is beyond comparison my Star Course. If you were going to take but one, that is the one. I suppose it is too late to make any more changes but it is a pity. I still think you had better try them as an afternoon course for ladies and young folks. Young and old alike enjoy them and I never gave them anywhere or under any circumstances without doubling or trebling my audiences. The other lectures are well enough, but if you want to set people into a state of wild enthusiasm, the "Story of the Revolution" is the thing. I am so sorry that distance has made it so difficult to arrange things. P.S. I would almost rather give the Story of the Revolution gratis than come out there and go away without giving it. I assure you it will be the greatest possible mistake not to have it.[52]

Eliot capitulated, and Fiske came prepared to deliver his tour de force.

---

[51] Ibid., May 7, 1887.

[52] Ibid., May 18, 1887.

Fiske left St. Louis on May 26, nine days later than originally intended. He had asked Eliot to provide him with some "definite notions" about the journey since he admitted his ideas were "hazy as to everything west of St. Louis."[53] The haze lifted as Fiske's Pullman sped westward. The size of the Snake River amazed him, particularly because he had never heard of it, and when he arrived at the Columbia, he was stupefied. "I vaguely thought of it as perhaps something like the Hudson," he wrote to his wife, "but oh, my dear this was the climax to the whole journey! The Hudson has often been compared to the Rhine. Compared with the Columbia River, the Hudson and the Rhine are simply NOWHERE!!!!!! Yes, simply nowhere." Later he professed to be "quite daft, having gone raving mad over the Oregon scenery. Why, it is the garden of the world!" Like so many visitors before him, Fiske found Portland like a New England town and its residents comparable to New England "folks," though with a "broader outlook upon life" and its duties than was common even with the "better class of New England folks."[54]

---

[53] Ibid., March 21, 1887.

[54] John Fiske to his wife, cited in John Spencer Clark, (ed.), The Life and Letters of John Fiske (2 volumes, Boston and New York, 1917), 363-366.

Large audiences received Fiske's lectures favorably. The Oregonian promoted ~~his~~ presentations enthusiastically, printed copious summaries and profusely thanked the sponsors of the series. "We owe all this," it said of the lectures, "to a fund subscribed by a dozen farsighted men, who appreciate that the intellectual side of civilization is worth fostering, and that Portland may shine as brightly as the center of such influences as of material enterprises."[55] Eliot himself could not have summarized his purposes more precisely.

Fiske was immodestly enthusiastic about his stay in Portland. "I am sort of like the circus, or the Italian opera, or the Greek play," he confided to his wife; "folks are just making a business of coming to hear me during the Fiske season, so to speak. The audiences are as enthusiastic here as elsewhere." Between lectures, he spent much of his time at the Eliot home, taking supper with the family and enjoying hours of "rare intellectual converse, mingled with delightful music."[56] It was not pure pleasure for Eliot, however, as he was responsible not only for all the arrangements but for the entertainment of Mr. Fiske as well. Personally insistent on punctuality, he found it a major task to get the perennially tardy Fiske to his lectures on time.[57] Fiske fulfilled all his responsibilities in style, however, concluding his series with a sermon in the Unitarian church on "The Mystery of Evil."[58] Stebbins commended Eliot for having "indeed done wonders in getting Fiske to do so much" and speculated that the lectures must have led to "an influx of intelligence and intellectual life."[59] Fiske accepted a return engagement five years later, speaking to Portlanders about Hamilton, Jefferson, Jackson and Las Casas, and to Astorians about the discovery of the Columbia River on the centennial of that event.

---

[55] Oregonian, June 8, 1887.

[56] Clark, Fiske, 366-367.

The social science lectures were the genesis of a much more ambitious project that Eliot had in mind. In 1881 he wrote to John

---

[57] One of the memories of Eliot's daughter Grace was that her father "spent half of his life being on time" (waiting for other people) while Fiske was "apt to be late." On one occasion, Eliot sent Fiske off sightseeing with Grace as his guide, and the historian, who had "an enormous abdomen," nearly crushed his companion in the small seat of the cable car that took them up to Council Crest. Interview with Grace Eliot Scott, June 4, 1968.

[58] This sermon was subsequently published as a chapter of Fiske's book, Through Nature to God.

[59] Stebbins to TLE, June 16, 1887.

Ainsworth about promoting an institute as a "center of light in our growing country." He was wondering if the Captain might not be able to "induce Mr. and Mrs. Reed, who have no children, to perpetuate their name with us, to join me in leading our citizens up to such real significance for the general public." Nothing came of the suggestion at the time, but two years later he reminded Ainsworth of the idea for a "People's Institute" for the encouragement of genuine self-culture among the various classes of society," for the "elevation of communities," and for the "uplift of the whole state." An institute would be a fitting memorial, he suggested, to Ainsworth's life-long friendship (with Reed and Robert R. Thompson) and to "the old O.S.N."[60]

In October 1887, Eliot approached the Reeds directly: "There is always something to busy us, always something to develop. I want you to celebrate some of these birthdays by founding a Reed Institute of lectures and art and music and museum. It will need a mine to run it."[61] A generation later, Eliot's vision became a reality, although in greatly altered form, and there arose on a tract to the south of Portland an institution reflecting the faith of an idealist in the boundless powers of education.

---

[60] TLE, drafts to J.C. Ainsworth, June 22, 1881 and July 1883.

---

[61] Cited in Wilbur, Eliot, 91. After Reed's death, the Rev. Eli Fay of Sierra Madre, California, asked Eliot to persuade Mrs. Reed to endow the "Reed Society for the Propagation of Unitarian Christianity on the Pacific Coast." He cited the success of the "enormous schemes" William Eliot accomplished by his "genius in unlocking the pockets of wealthy people. Are you not the very man in Apostolic succession to outline the magnificent work which it is in [Mrs. Reed's] power to do and which she ought to feel . . . a pleasure and an honor to do?" Eli Fay to TLE, May 26, 1896.

CHAPTER VII

BUILDING AGENCIES OF HOPE

> I hear that you are "running" about all the moral and religious machinery in Oregon, which indeed is not to be wondered at.
>
> Horatio Stebbins to Thomas Lamb Eliot,
> July 1874

The most enduring memorials to the career of Thomas Lamb Eliot were the institutions of education and child welfare that he helped create in Oregon. Reed College and the public schools of Portland benefited from Eliot's faith in education, and three agencies for the care of the young owed their existence in part to his concern for dependent and troubled children. Between 1872 and 1885, Eliot led in the founding of the Oregon Humane Society, the Children's Home and, especially, the Boys and Girls Aid Society of Oregon.

The origins of Eliot's role in the founding of the Humane Society border on the legendary. Supposedly, the hack driver who transported Eliot and his family from the dock to the Frazars' on the wet December morning in 1867 had beaten his horse unmercifully "to impress quality folk"; instead, he impressed Eliot with the "need to do something for horses in Oregon." Five years later, Eliot, acting on the earlier resolve, called together a group of twelve prominent Portlanders and organized a local chapter of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.[1]

The progress of the Society during its early years was uneven. The associated gentlemen were busy men who had little extra time to investigate instances of alleged cruelty or see to the prosecution of offenders. Nor did they have the benefit of legal or public support. It was virtually impossible for strangers to prevent cruelty to animals by abusive owners or to children by abusive parents. For ten years the group carried on informally through annual meetings and ad hoc inquiries into cases of abuse. Though Eliot declared at a public meeting in 1878 that the Society was lifting the standard of justice in Portland by protecting prisoners, wild boys, paupers and orphans as well as animals, a formal organization and effective program did not emerge until 1882, when the Society reorganized and incorporated as the Oregon Humane Society. It extended its good offices to orphans and the children of dissolute parents as well as to animals.[2]

---

[1] The group included a number of men, such as Henry Corbett, Henry Failing and William Ladd, who were associated with Eliot in other humanitarian projects. One of the men, Sylvester Farrell, a longtime friend and neighbor of Eliot's, was by one account the hack driver who delivered Eliot and who, by another account, beat his horse. See Wilbur, Eliot, 21, 123 n. 24, and Frances Blakely, "Boy Minister Launched Humanity in Oregon," Oregon Journal, December 12, 1948.

In succeeding years, the Society became more effective. The public schools of Portland aided its cause by sponsoring an essay contest on kindness to animals and the City of Portland detailed one of its police officers to act as humane agent for investigating cases of cruelty to children or animals. Eliot and his associate, William T. Shanahan, accomplished the most significant breakthrough in 1885 when, through friends in the legislature, they won legal backing for the work of the Society. House Bill 48, "an act for the more effectual prevention of cruelty to animals," passed both houses unanimously and stipulated in detail not only punishable instances of cruelty but also procedures, fines, sentences and jurisdictions for various offenses. It was landmark legislation, and in the year of its passage Eliot became president of the Society, a post he held without interruption for the next twenty years.[3]

---

[2] Scott, Portland, 372-373; Gaston, Portland, 470-471.

[3] Wilbur, Eliot, 62-63; Oregon Laws, Statutes etc. Senior Laws (1885), 45-47 (hereinafter Oregon Session Laws); Oregon. Legislative Assembly. House. Journal of Proceedings (1885), 246 (hereinafter, Journal of the House); Oregon. Legislative Assembly. Senate. Journal of Proceedings (1885), 281 (hereinafter, Journal of the Senate).

Eliot's role in the founding of "The Home" was quite different in character. For several years before his arrival in the city, a number of Portland's matrons had periodically solicited donations from merchants to aid destitute immigrants arriving in the city. Out of these informal efforts there developed a formal organization, the Ladies' Relief Society (March 1867), which pledged itself to care for orphaned children and relieve want and destitution. Among the chief movers of this organization were the wives of George Atkinson and Captain Ainsworth.[4]

Within several years it became apparent to the ladies of the Relief Society that they could no longer adequately care for the city's orphaned children without some sort of receiving home. It was also impossible for them to construct a building without male assistance, because the law did not allow women either to form corporations or hold real property. Captain Ainsworth invited a number of friends to become associates of the women and provide a legal basis for their corporation. On July 12, 1871, Ainsworth, Eliot, William S. Ladd, Henry Failing, and David C. Lewis signed Articles of Incorporation for The Home, for which the incorporators became trustees. It was perfectly clear from the Articles, however, that though the men might hold legal title to purse and property, the actual policies would be "determined by the ladies who associated themselves together as members of The Home."[5] The men were to function only when legal and financial necessities required.

---

[4] Oregonian, March 19, 1967. The Society divided the city into wards and assigned a member to canvass each ward for need.

The ladies called upon their associates three times in the succeeding dozen years, each time for the expansion of facilities. Eliot, whose duties as secretary of the trustees were large by virtue of an elastic clause in the Articles, bore the heaviest burden of securing funds. In 1871, he, Ainsworth and ten other gentlemen each subscribed $100 toward the purchase of a site. A small house on the property was to serve as a temporary receiving home.[6]

---

[5] Ibid.; Article II, "Articles of Incorporation of 'The Home,'" Oregon Historical Society.

[6] "By-laws of 'The Home,'" Section 10; Ainsworth to TLE, July 26, 1871. Contrast this method of fund-raising with one employed in San Francisco about the same time. There, the "peculiarly impulsive generosity "of the populace transformed the payment of a political bet into a bonanza for the Roman Catholic and Protestant orphanages, both of whose treasuries were "very low." As the loser of the bet proceeded down main street playing a hand organ, well known citizens followed him, collecting the shower of coins that rained from the windows. The $10,000 was sufficient to maintain both institutions for a year. See Charles Loring Brace, The New West: or, California in 1867-1868 (New York, 1869), 71.

The tiny structure was soon inadequate for the large number of children who needed shelter, and within a year Eliot was conducting a funding campaign for a larger building. He utilized his pulpit, the press and personal persuasion to enlist public support. In a sermon to his congregation, a number of whose women were active members of the Ladies' Relief Society, he suggested that his members might put meaning in their worship "by going right off this week and building that sorely needed Home for the wandering and destitute."[7] A week later there appeared in the Oregonian "An Appeal to the Citizens of Portland," written by Eliot and signed by the officers of the Ladies' Relief Society, and by William S. Ladd, president of the trustees. Recounting the good and "wholly unsectarian" works of the Relief Society, he urged Portlanders to expand the philanthropy for Portland's self-respect and from its "duty as a Christian community."[8] Eliot followed up his public appeals with personal notes to selected individuals, suggesting that they respond cheerfully, even at the cost of self-denial. He was bold to ask their help, he concluded, because he himself was a subscriber, "with a shoulder at the wheel."[9]

---

[7] TLE, "Let All the People Say, 'Amen,'" December 1871.

[8] Oregonian, December 20, 1871.

An interesting reaction to Eliot's appeal came from Dorothea Dix. She sent him $112 to cover his contribution to The Home and some pointed advice about building charitable institutions. As to money, she declared, Eliot had no moral right to apply his small means to "outside ends" and defraud his wife and children by diverting family funds to some "quixotic charity." In the matter of building institutions, she warned him against pushing too far too fast, for his own sake as well as in consideration of donors "who tend to resist when pressed too much and too often." From her standpoint, The Home was being established too soon because adequate means were not at Eliot's command "in a true and natural way." It was a family fault, she suggested, as William Eliot tended to err in the same directions. Unsound practices, however, were likely to be "less dangerous in St. Louis than in Oregon."[10]

---

[9] TLE to ?, draft, December 25, 1871.

[10] D. L. Dix to TLE, January 14, January 17, January 26 and February 26, 1872.

Advice to the contrary not withstanding, Eliot pushed ahead to secure the $3,000 the women needed for the building. On August 10, 1872, Mrs. John C. Ainsworth announced that The Home was entirely completed and ready for the furniture necessary to put it in working order. Appealing for carpets, dry goods and bedding was women's work after all, and having pondered what they had wrought, the trustees adjourned sine die in April 1873, not to meet again for a decade.

When the board reconvened in April 1883, it was to raise money for yet another building.[11] The old Home had cost $3,000 and was designed to house thirty children. What the ladies now desired was a building housing a hundred children and costing as much as $20,000. Even within the Ladies' Relief Society there was a dissenting minority who believed that "the erection of so large and costly a building was premature and far in advance of the progress of our city." Funds soon began to materialize, however. Henry Winslow Corbett, a trustee, contributed $10,000 to the endowment fund; Henry Villard, the transportation magnate, donated a large tract of land in South Portland; and the state legislature appropriated $3,000 for the institution. Eliot set out to raise the balance by public subscription, and through the familiar media of pulpit, press and personal appeal garnered all but $2,000 by the opening on November 22, 1884.[12]

---

[11] Oregonian, August 10, 1872; Minutes of the Trustees of The Home, April 3, 1872 and April 19, 1873, Oregon Historical Society.

Eliot's work as a trustee of The Home was primarily financial and administrative. Discussions of land, debts and endowments filled the meetings of the board. The 1890s were especially difficult years for The Home, as they were for most institutions, charitable as well as commercial, in Oregon. In 1897 the state of Oregon failed to make its customary appropriation, and The Home survived the year only by funds raised at a public meeting. Crisis followed upon crisis, resulting in a severe contraction of the work of The Home. During this critical period, the death of two founders (William S. Ladd in 1895 and Henry Failing in 1898) left Eliot with the chief responsibility for sustaining the institution, a burden that was eased somewhat by several generous bequests.

---

[12] Minutes of the Trustees of The Home, April 10, 1883 and April 1885.

After the deaths of Henry Corbett (1903) and William Wadhams (1905) Eliot assumed the presidency of the board, a post he held from 1906 to 1916.[13]

While the Humane Society and The Home both utilized Eliot's promotional talents, it remained for the Boys and Girls Aid Society fully to tax his abilities as a social philosopher. Nearly fourteen years elapsed between Eliot's first sermon on the problem of wayward youth in 1871 and the formal incorporation of the Society in 1885, and during the period Eliot's thinking changed greatly as to the best method of treating juvenile delinquents. Eliot was more deeply involved in the shaping and managing of this social agency than any other, and he employed every available technique of persuasion to obtain the kind of institution he thought Portland should have. The Boys and Girls Aid Society was, in the estimation of one of Eliot's daughters, among the interests closest to his heart.[14]

---

[13] Ibid., Especially April 6, 1897, April 5, 1898, April 4, 1899. During the period of Eliot's leadership the trustees and the ladies of the Relief Society commenced a bitter feud over the disposition of the estate of Xariffa Failing. For a sketch of this dispute and the subsequent evolution of The Home from an orphanage to a center for the treatment of emotionally disturbed children, see Oregonian, March 19, 1967.

[14] Interview with Mrs. Grace Eliot Scott, June 4, 1968.

Portland's lack of a reform school troubled Eliot from the beginning of his ministry in Oregon, and he shared his concern with his congregation. The increasing incidence of juvenile crime posed a blatant, malignant threat to the community, he said, and there would be unhappy consequences if responsible citizens did not act soon and decisively to interrupt the tendency. "What comes today as an invitation will come tomorrow as a threat," he warned, buttressing his admonitions with choice illustrations gleaned from the papers. A reform school was a necessity for Portland, not only because such an institution was regarded as the accepted means of dealing with youthful criminals, but because, he believed, it could effectively combine the three great reformatory principles of restraint, educational opportunity and hard work. The last was most important, for the experience of Eastern institutions had demonstrated that genuine changes in character were possible even in semi-penal institutions when there was opportunity for meaningful work.

Establishing a reform school in Portland, Eliot advised, would require a great deal of preparatory work. It would be necessary to formulate a workable plan, determine the cost of the institution and secure an appropriation from the city council. It would also be necessary to obtain enabling legislation from the state legislature, including the legal right for the City of Portland to commit minors to an institution. It would be imperative, finally, to secure the endorsement of leading citizens, the "earnest philanthropic men and women who are willing to be workers and trustees for the community." All of this would require a goodly amount of work, but a sacrifice which participants should be willing to make as a religious offering. "The voice of Jesus invites us from the cross to follow Him," Eliot concluded. As it often did when Eliot preached on social issues, the Oregonian carried the full text of his sermon.[15]

Tangible evidence of a response, and of considerable preparation, appeared before the Oregon Legislature the following fall as House Bill 141. The measure sought authorization for a reform school for Multnomah County and provisions for the committal of juveniles to the institution. The names of twenty-four persons--bankers, merchants, ministers, lawyers and judges--appeared in the bill as incorporators and potential trustees for the wards whom the county court might remand to their custody. In addition to conditions of commitment, employment and release of inmates, the bill specified that the county was to make available a grant of land from the poorhouse farm and match voluntary contributions up to $25, 000. It was the legislation that Eliot had wanted, and he hopefully watched it move through the legislative mill. The Oregonian supported the measure and applauded its passage with expressions of confidence that such a reform school would "save children from a life of degradation." With legislation secured, the paper asserted, the obligation to implement it lay heavily upon the religious conscience of the community. "Christianity as well as humanity demands it," the editor concluded.[16]

---

[15] TLE, "No Man Cared for my Soul," Oregonian, January 23, 1871.

The mandate was apparently not strong enough for the incorporators, for they never incorporated. Although the gentlemen held several meetings and appointed a committee to perfect an organization, no reform school materialized. The Oregonian suggested that the institution had succumbed to the business recession of the mid-1870s, but it also reminded the citizens of Portland that juvenile crime had not abated, and if they waited until business again became brisk the city might have to wait forever.[17]

---

[16] Oregon Sessions Laws (1872), 139-142; Thomas Crawford to TLE, October 17, 1872; Oregonian, November 22, 1872.

Eliot for one was not willing to drop the project. Neither was Aaron Lindsley, pastor of First Presbyterian Church, who shared Eliot's interest. The ministers gathered all the information available about the operation of reform schools in other states, and together they attended meetings of the National Prison Congress in New York in June 1876. They intended, as Eliot put it, "to obtain all the light we could," but from the papers they heard and the discussions in which they participated they concluded there was little light to be had. Traditional methods had rather produced "wrecks everywhere," it seemed, and Eliot and Lindsley agreed that failure was certain in Oregon "for any plans likely to get the popular ear or suit the popular purse."[18]

After his return from Europe in 1877, Eliot took up the old project with new resolve. Fresh ideas for reclaiming wayward youth were in the air. The success of Charles Loring Brace and the Children's Aid Society of New York in "placing-out" unwanted and troublesome youngsters had attracted the attention of social workers throughout the country. Horatio Stebbins, who encouraged Eliot's interest in reform schools, also urged him to consider small living units and "a show of family life" and deemphasize prison manners peculiar to large groups housed in one building. He later suggested that Eliot visit certain Eastern schools, particularly in Massachusetts, that operated on the family system.[19]

---

[17] Oregonian, October 14, 1875.

[18] Oregonian, October 9, 1884.

In 1882 an opportunity for concrete action was presented to Eliot. William S. Ladd, the Portland banker, offered to donate a site and part of the cost for a state industrial school if the Oregon Legislature would complete and sustain the institution. At Ladd's request, Eliot inspected the State Reform School of Connecticut at Meriden, which had acquired a reputation for the success of its liberalized regimen. During most of the forty years of its existence Meriden had been a traditional penal institution for youth, complete with uniforms, barred windows and solitary confinement for incorrigibles. A reorganization, however, had introduced a more homelike atmosphere at Meriden, and it impressed Eliot as "a reasonably successful institution." He returned to Oregon prepared to recommend the Meriden system for Ladd's school as well as to caution that successful emulation of the Eastern model would require the most favorable circumstances, particularly a minimum of political interference and an administrator of the "rarest powers."[20]

---

[19] On the work of Brace, see Miriam Z. Langsam, Children West: A History of the Placing-Out System of the New York Children's Aid Society 1853-1890 (Madison, 1964). On Brace's visit to California in 1867-68, he observed that the San Francisco House of Refuge was "well conducted, but on the somewhat old congregated system, and there is not much effort directed to the prevention of crime among children." He also noted that there was "much kind charity toward the deserving poor, whose sufferings in California are beyond belief, because here men are ashamed to beg." Brace, The New West, 72; Stebbins to TLE, January 24, 1871 and November 22, 1881.

Eliot never had the chance to promote a liberalized type of institution on the Meriden model. During his absence, the legislature, after three perfunctory readings on the same day, voted to postpone indefinitely a bill to incorporate and support the Ladd Industrial School.[21]

Two years passed before Eliot and his friends were ready to try again. The appeal for public support began this time with a letter from Eliot to the Oregonian that the editor chose to make his own editorial for the day. It was a candid letter in which Eliot frankly admitted the change of mind that he had undergone on the issue of reform schools. "I write with far more diffidence than I might have done a dozen years ago when I thought I knew it all," he began. Considerable study and experience now led him to condemn the traditional reform school as "a hybrid between the home and the penitentiary with most of the evils and none of the benefits of each." The record in each state that had attempted such hybrid institutions, he declared, was one of expensive blunders, mortifying failures and questionable successes. In most instances, the institution had turned out to be the "eyesore of the commonwealth."

---

[20] Oregonian, October 9, 1884; William W. Squire, Charities and Corrections in Connecticut (New Haven, 1936), 11. Eliot was on leave and residing in New England when Ladd asked him to inspect Meriden. TLE to HRE, December 14, 1882.

[21] Journal of the House (1882), 492, 494, 502; Wilbur, Eliot, 65. Aaron Lindsley reported to the National Conference of Charities and Correction in 1885 that the legislature had defeated the bill because of "growing doubts of the expediency of the system known as the reform school." Proceedings of the National Conference of Charities and Correction, XII (Boston, 1886), 74, (hereinafter, Proceedings).

The basic mistake in every instance, Eliot suggested, had been the use of the wrong principle. The blending of home and jail, restraint and freedom, tended to cancel out the benefits of each and foster vice rather than develop character and self-discipline. A new principle, the family system, seemed to offer a better solution to the problem of juvenile crime. As adapted by the Boys and Girls Aid Society of San Francisco, that principle contained "more of promise and of economical, Christian adaptation than any other," Eliot concluded, and he was ready to advocate its introduction in Oregon.

Readers of the Oregonian, he promised, would hear more of the proposal.[22]

Other forms of promotion reinforced Eliot's letter to the Oregonian. Edmund T. Dooley, superintendent of the Boys and Girls Aid Society of San Francisco, spoke at the First Unitarian church and explained the workings of his agency.[23] Representative George W. Riddle of Douglas County introduced, at Eliot's request, House Bill 165, providing for the suspension of final judgment against minors in criminal cases and providing also for the commitment of such minors "to the custody of certain charitable corporations." Conditions of such commitment required the minor to be under sixteen years of age and potentially reformable, and that the charitable corporations in question be "strictly non-sectarian." Ill and unable to attend much of the session, Representative Riddle nevertheless assured Eliot that his friends in the

---

[22] Oregonian, October 9, 1884. Among reactions to the letter were the responses of William Eliot, who liked it very much and Rev. William Stubbs, chaplain to Portland's seamen, who suggested that the authorities purchase a freighter rather than a farm and turn it into an industrial school ship. William G. Eliot to TLE, October 18, 1884, WGE; Oregonian, October 14, 1884.

[23] Wilbur, Eliot, 65.

House would oversee passage of his bill and hoped that "it might be the means of doing much good." The bill passed both houses with large majorities.[24]

With favorable legislation on the statute books, Eliot, in company with Aaron Lindsley of First Presbyterian Church and Harvey W. Scott, editor of the Oregonian, was ready to press his case for a family-type agency. The Portland Ministerial Association had deputized the three men to follow Eliot's plan to completion, and the committee met in Scott's office early in April 1884 to map strategy. Their first public communication, the promised sequel to Eliot's earlier letter, was clearly from the Unitarian's pen.

Two distinctly different types of institution were possible under House Bill 165, Eliot warned. One was the traditional type of reform school, with its undistinguished record in other states. Unless Portland's "most influential citizens" were on their guard and worked with zeal and efficiency against it, such an institution might well be foisted on the city. The alternative, more befitting Oregon's "population and intelligence," was to build after the model of the San

---

[24] Journal of the House (1885), 137, 613; Journal of the Senate (1885), 522; Oregon Session Laws (1885), 124-125; G. W. Riddle to TLE, February 19, 1885.

Francisco Boys and Girls Aid Society, which had compiled a useful record of service in California. Not only did placing-out offer the advantages of close supervision, kindly guardianship and opportunities for adjustment to society under normal circumstances, it offered these features at a reasonable cost to the taxpayer. As a voluntary agency with a small receiving home and salaried agent, it required only a minimum of financial backing. It was too late in the day, Eliot warned, to meet threats to society by recourse to traditional measures. Portland and Oregon held the opportunity, rather, to challenge criminality at its "obscure beginnings" and defeat it by the adoption of enlightened principles:

> The forces of regeneration and culture, through religion, education and purer government, must forever be our chief reliance against the evil which oppresses us and which of right vex our peace of mind until the rooted sources are sought out and the stronger growth of right principles put in their place.[25]

Two months later, there gathered in the parlors of Ladd and Tilton's bank a select group of influential citizens, trusted associates of Eliot in affairs of church, business and philanthropy. The group selected William S. Ladd as its chairman, and Ladd, in turn, appointed Eliot the chairman of a committee of five responsible for perfecting an organization. Of the other four members, two were Unitarians and Eliot's parishioners. A week after the initial meeting, the group reassembled to hear Eliot discuss the proposed work of the Society and to act upon the constitution which the committee submitted. "The object of the Society," Eliot read, "shall be to improve the condition of the homeless, neglected and abused children of the State, and only such means shall be employed in the work of the Society as are strictly nonsectarian in character." There in the preamble was the Unitarian principle of nonsectarianism; and the governing structure of the Society, with nine trustees and an executive committee of three, was a clear reflection of the polity of the First Unitarian Society.[26]

---

[25] Oregonian, April 7, 1885.

Eliot's influence was as pervasive in the early affairs of the Society as it had been in its organization, particularly before it secured a full-time superintendent in 1891. Other men, especially Ira F. Powers, chairman of the executive committee, bore much of the daily work load of the superintendency, but Eliot contributed counsel and hard work on a wide variety of projects. It was Eliot, for example, who secured the services of a police officer as liaison between the county courts and the Society; who prepared most of the printed materials of the Society for both internal and external use; who procured free travel accomodations for wards of the Society; who led the Society, successfully, in sponsoring anti-tobacco legislation; and on whose insistence, from the very beginning, the Society kept meticulous records, both of its finances and of the case histories of its dependents.[27]

---

[26] Minutes of the Boys and Girls Aid Society of Oregon (hereinafter BGAS), July 3 and July 10, 1885. The minutes of the Society are at the Society's offices in Portland, Oregon.

Eliot's service to the Society extended beyond housekeeping chores to questions of basic policy. He was the Society's chief spokesman, for example, in opposing the creation of a reform school. Support for such a traditional institution had waxed and waned since Eliot had first promoted the idea in 1871, and a renewed surge of interest in 1887 brought an authorization measure (House Bill 62) before the legislature. The Society, many of whose members shared Eliot's antipathy to the proposal, deputized Eliot to try to prevent passage of the bill.[28] By the time Eliot arrived in Salem, the measure had moved routinely through two readings and a hearing by the House Education Committee, which gave it a "do pass" recommendation. Eliot appeared before the committee and argued strongly against the bill. On the day following his testimony, the House referred the bill back to the Education Committee, which subsequently reported it back to the floor without recommendation.[29] The reform school was a dead issue for that session, although not for the next. Approximately the same measure (Senate Bill 117) came before the legislature in 1889 and passed with no delay and little opposition. Eliot regarded it as "a step backward in the treatment of juvenile delinquency."[30]

---

[27] Ibid., November 19 and December 8, 1885; January 13, 1886; March 8, 1887; January 11 and June 12, 1888; March 12 and May 7, 1889; October 14, 1890. On the tobacco issue Eliot had moved (June 12, 1888) to appoint a committee to restrain the sale of tobacco and cigarettes to minors and later reported to the Society (March 1, 1889) that Senate Bill 38 had passed as introduced to the legislature. See Oregon Sessions Laws (1889), 6. Helen Spaulding, a member of First Unitarian Society and of the board of the Boys and Girls Aid Society, explained the Society's concern about tobacco at the next annual meeting (May 7, 1889). The addiction to tobacco, she asserted, "strikes at the root of all evil, that of sapping the will power." In California, she continued, "ten or twelve boys had recently been committed to the insane asylum from causes traceable directly to the smoking of cigarettes."

---

[28] Minutes of the BGAS, February 8, 1887.

[29] Journal of the House (1887), 139, 348, 521, 586-587; O. Summers to TLE, February 9, 1887. Eliot told the annual meeting of the Society a month later (March 1887) that he had succeeded "in preventing passage of a reform school bill." Minutes of the BGAS, March 8, 1887.

Although Eliot was bold in establishing the agency, he was extremely cautious about allowing it to develop. Two years after the Society began work, it still had neither a superintendent nor a building, and the trustees were putting in overtime as case workers. It was, indeed, a "hand to mouth" existence as Eliot described operations to the members at the annual meeting of 1887, but nevertheless preferable to debts and bad management. Better to get along without professional workers than run the risk of engaging the wrong ones through haste, he explained; better to have no building than incur debts that might discredit or cripple the Society. Besides, he advised, the trustees were gaining valuable experience in the actual work of the Society.[31]

---

[30] Journal of the Senate (1889), 374; Journal of the House (1889), 496-497. The Act empowered the Superintendent to "employ such methods of discipline as will as far as possible, reform their character, preserve their health, promote regular improvement in their trades and employments and secure to them fixed habits of industry and morality." The law applied to convicted minors of twenty years or younger, who might be committed to the school for not less than a year and until either reformed or otherwise legally discharged. They might, during their term, be apprenticed out under indenture. The legislature appropriated $30,000 to construct the institution and called for the use of convict labor and funds from convict labor to the extent possible. Oregon Session Laws (1889), 15-18; Wilbur, Eliot, 67.

Another two years passed under the same arrangement, and the trustees were becoming restless and weary. Why no building or the other equipment of a full institution, they were asking. Because the right candidate for the superintendency had not yet come along, Eliot replied. While he could have found one hundred preachers or one hundred jailers to take the job, he wanted a man who could combine the best of both professions; and such a man, even if he were available, could command at least $5,000 a year. The trustees should do the best they could while they waited.[32]

While the trustees continued to gather data, read case histories, prepare reports and convey their young wards to foster homes in the country, Eliot corresponded with candidates for the superintendency. At a special meeting of the Society in March 1891 he announced that the increasing demands of the work and the growing income from an endowment fund had made the engagement of a full-time administrator advisable. The selection committee, of which he was chairman, reduced consideration to two candidates: an Eastern gentleman whose demands for salary made it inadvisable to bring him west from a "sphere of remarkable usefulness," and Edmund T. Dooley, superintendent of the Boys and Girls Aid Society of San Francisco, who had expressed willingness to come north within the month and serve in Oregon for $1,500 a year. The employment of Dooley was only a temporary solution to the problem of leadership, however, as he was too strict a disciplinarian for the trustees. They terminated his services after one year,[33] and not until William T. Gardner became "temporary" superintendent early in 1893 did the Society begin to develop continuity in the office.[34]

---

[31] Minutes of the BGAS, March 8, 1887.

[32] *Ibid.*, May 3, 1889.

Eliot also did what he could to assist in the material development of the Society. While his counsel helped deter the agency from over-extending itself at the outset, his work was also instrumental in securing a sizable endowment. The will of Ella Smith, a member of the First Unitarian Society, contained a bequest of $40,000 for the

---

[33] Ibid., March 24 and April 7, 1891; April 1, 1892. Mr. Dooley was apparently too institutional and unfamilial for the board; he required children to march to meals, and the meals themselves marched in an invariable weekly order. See Dorothy O. Johansen "Home With Family for Unfortunate Child," Oregon Voter, XXXV (October 22, 1949), 15.

[34] Minutes of the BGAS, January 24, 1893.

Society; Rosa Burrell, another of Eliot's members, bequeathed $9,000.[35] In 1895 Eliot volunteered to help Superintendent Gardner solicit funds for a receiving home.[36] "I do not think it will be very hard," he wrote his wife, "if I can get Mrs. [Simeon] Reed's aid."[37] Amanda Reed donated half of the $2,000 that was needed.

In 1895, the Society received its first appropriation from the State of Oregon ($2,500), and with state aid there inevitably came inquiries into the Society's operations. Some of the early investigations were not prompted only by financial considerations, however, for the Society had acquired some vocal critics. Letters to the Oregonian alluded to leaders of the Society as a clique of wealthy and literary people who meddled in family affairs simply to gain social prestige; as do-gooders because they sought to protect children from such practices as using tobacco and appearing on the stage of North End resorts; and as usurpers because they acquired by court order power superior to that of parents.[38]

---

[35] Gaston, Portland, 461.

[36] Minutes of the BGAS, December 10, 1895.

[37] TLE to HRE, December 11, 1895.

[38] Johansen, "Home with Family," 16.

In 1901 the state Senate determined to conduct "the most rigid scrutiny into the Society's management," that "if there were any ground for complaint it might be known, and if not, that the cavilers might be silenced." The investigation produced no specific adverse testimony; the visiting team of legislators, in fact, could only commend what they found--from the care and condition of the facilities to the management of personal and financial records. The record of services rendered in the previous six years, by a largely volunteer staff, was in itself amazing: 1,737 homeless children cared for, with an average of thirty-five residents each year in the receiving home and 150 placed out. The personnel of the board of directors alone appeared to the Senate committee as "a guarantee of the efficiency and reliability of any charitable enterprise with which they would associate themselves."[39] A committee of the following legislature reported essentially the same findings.[40]

At the death of Henry W. Corbett in 1903, Eliot was unanimously elected to fill the vacancy on the board of trustees. It was the first time in nearly two decades of service to the Society that Eliot held an office, although he had rarely missed a meeting of the board during the entire period. He had preferred to be an unofficial counselor and friend to the Society. He may have regretted the change, but he was in Japan when elected and had no opportunity to decline. The following year George H. Williams, president of the Society, named Eliot chairman of the executive committee, a post he held until 1911.[41]

---

[39] Journal of the Senate (1901), 561-563.

[40] Journal of the Senate (1903), 576-577.

In this new position, Eliot worked closely with Superintendent Gardner, especially in representing the interests of the Society before the legislature. This was an exceedingly important, and sometimes trying, function for Eliot. In 1905, for example, the two men testified before the Ways and Means Committee and were "very much surprised at their actions in asking questions respecting the methods of the Society and believed there was some person at the bottom of the questions interested in persecuting the Society."[42] In the wake of the ensuing investigation, Gardner resigned because the "unsatisfactory manner in which the legislative committee made its report" seemed to imply that he was not "giving satisfaction."

---

[41] Minutes of the BGAs, April 21, 1903 and May 3, 1904.

[42] Ibid., February 14, 1905.

Eliot was hard pressed to get the superintendent to rescind his action.[43]

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Eliot was deeply involved in the work of three private child welfare agencies that he, as much as anyone, had helped to create.[44] In 1905, he was simultaneously president of the Oregon Humane Society, president of The Home and chairman of the executive committee of the Boys and Girls Aid Society. Orphans and wayward children were not Oregon's only dependents, however, and Eliot was simultaneously at work ameliorating the lot of other classes of social outcasts. His ministry to misfits and unfortunates was but another facet of his intense desire to build in Oregon a stable, orderly and moral society.

---

[43] Ibid., May 9, 1905.

[44] The Municipal Charities Survey of the National Conference of Charities and Correction in 1898 revealed that the City of Portland "maintains no institution for children, supports none at public expense in private institutions, and places out none in family homes. Children, sometimes a charge on the County, are provided for at private institutions, and through them are placed in family homes." Proceedings, XXV (1898), 172-173.

CHAPTER VIII

MINISTERING TO MISFITS

> My love to Tom--of course--if he takes my advice.
>
> Dorothea Dix to Henrietta R. Eliot,
> May 19, 1870

> I urgently press upon you the good sense you know how to exercise in preventing expenditures to gratify the vicious choice of ambitious architects and reckless commissioners in the construction of Hospital buildings.
>
> Dorothea Dix to Thomas Lamb Eliot,
> April 4, 1881

There were three categories of adult social dependents for whom Thomas Eliot felt a particularly large measure of responsibility: criminals, insane and Indians. Apart from their diverse problems, these groups shared at least two things in common. They were outcasts from a society that tended to segregate and forget them, and their care required the maintenance of institutions that, all too often, were poorly conceived, inadequately managed and politically manipulated. Eliot's travels brought him into frequent contact with various penal and mental institutions and Indian reservations of the Northwest, and his careful scrutiny found them wanting. In attempting to change or improve the lot of social outcasts, he employed essentially the same methods of promotion, collaboration and legislation that he had used in organizing agencies of hope.

Eliot's interest in penology reflected the influence of his father and Dorothea Dix. William Eliot had criticized conditions in the local jails of St. Louis, which he had termed "Andersonvilles of neglected suffering," on the grounds that they were failing in their three principal functions: protecting society, preventing evil and redeeming the lost.[1] The career of Dorothea Dix was no less influential in sharpening the social conscience of the younger Eliot. There was a warm relationship between the aging humanitarian and the son of her close associate that lasted till her death and often led Eliot to seek her counsel. Her preeminent concern for the "moral and spiritual regeneration of prisoners" had led her to speak out against hasty pardons and capital punishment, neither of which extremes, she felt, promoted rehabilitation, and to advocate segregating prisoners according to class and age.[2]

---

[1] William G. Eliot, Statement of the Actual Conditions of the Prisoners in the City and County of St. Louis, Prepared after Careful Inspection and Respectfully Addressed to his Fellow Citizens (St. Louis, 1865), WGE.

[2] Helen Marshall, Dorothea Dix: Forgotten Samaritan (New York, 1967), 111.

Miss Dix's visit to Portland in the summer of 1869 and her inspection, with Eliot, of the Multnomah County jail led Eliot to take action in behalf of the prisoners there.[3] As soon as he was able to shift his Sunday afternoon service to the evening, he scheduled regular visits to the jail to conduct brief services, converse with the inmates and distribute reading materials.

By 1875 Eliot was angry enough over conditions at the jail to address a memorial to the county court urging speedy correction of the crowded and unsanitary conditions that made it little better than a training school for criminals. His own revulsion at the inhuman conditions was reinforced by the views of his father, whose contemporary paper, "Treatment of the Guilty" was severely critical of prison dress, brutal treatment and other forms of degradation that robbed prisoners of their humanity and worked against rehabilitation.[4]

---

[3] The William Eliots and several friends, including Dorothea Dix, were on a vacation trip to California and Oregon, utilizing the new transcontinental railroad. William Eliot, serving as a special correspondent for the Missouri Democrat, wrote of his travels in a series of seven articles. He contrasted his own experiences with those of Samuel Bowles, who had come west four years earlier as part of "a splendid excursion party before which all rough places were smoothed." For Portland, William Eliot had an abundance of praise. In spite of the limitations of its remoteness, it was, he said, "one of the pleasantest and most attractive places I have ever visited." While Bowles noted the influence of New England in Oregon, Eliot marveled at the number of transplanted Missourians. William G. Eliot, "Letter from Rev. Dr. Eliot: To the Pacific and Back," clipping from the Missouri Democrat, n.d. (1869), Notebook 10, WGE.

Eliot believed that his memorial achieved substantial improvements in lighting and ventilating the jail in the basement of the county courthouse. But much remained to be done, especially for juveniles in detention. After one visit he personally employed "a worthy lady, skilled in heart and head" to tutor three boys who were likely to remain in prison "until the mistaken leniency of the courts casts them back, one after the other, into the world." He obtained pardons for two other youths on condition he find them homes in the country.[5] Such experiences helped strengthen Eliot's determination to provide better alternatives for juvenile offenders.

During his year in Europe (1876-1877), Eliot sought opportunities to broaden his knowledge of penology. He visited prisons and reformatories in various parts of the continent, not only because he bore the *ad hoc* title, Oregon Commissioner of Prisons, but because he was genuinely interested in offering to his community the widest possible sampling of opinion. In England, the work of the Howard Association especially impressed him because that organization stressed the importance of reformatory and radically preventive treatment. He stuffed his valises with the Association's publications and returned to the States prepared to delve still more deeply into the problem of punishment.[6]

---

[4] William G. Eliot, "Treatment of the Guilty," Notebook 8, February 1875, 129-132.

[5] TLE to Rufus Ellis, May 1, 1876.

Other advice and material came from the East. Dorothea Dix sent Eliot, at his request, her own version of an idealized penal facility that maximized the reformatory rather than the security aspect. Provisions for the health and happiness of the prisoners stood at the head of her list, with light, exercise yard and vocational facilities mandatory for a humane institution.[7] William Eliot sent him French prison publications because he regarded them as the "latest word of the best informed practical reformers" and because his son was "so much and so intelligently interested in prison discipline and reform" and felt "compelled to do something in that sort."[8]

---

[6] Among the numerous publications of the Howard Association that Eliot brought back with him was one ("American Gaols") that ranked American prisons generally on a par with those of Greece and Turkey and advised American missionaries and other cultural exporters to stay at home and solve their own problems first.

[7] D. L. Dix to TLE, August 15, 1877.

[8] William G. Eliot to TLE, January 27, 1879 and January 30, 1885, WGE.

A suitable target for Eliot's arsenal was still conveniently at hand, for conditions in the county jail had not improved during his absence. For over fifteen years, beginning in 1879, he kept the jail issue alive. There was little moderation in his utterances; many of them carried the venom of enraged eloquence. He called the jail variously, "an open sore," a "fearful blunder in public morality," "an outrage on moral order," a "black hole of Calcutta," and a "corporate idiocy by which in punishing each criminal the state propagates at least three new ones." Part of the blame he attached to the facility itself--a subterranean excavation of pervasive darkness and poor ventilation (he calculated that there was 60% less air than the minimum required by law for the public buildings of Portland) where, in the badly-overcrowded cells, dirty prisoners in dirty clothes shared quarters with myriad vermin. Part of the blame he placed on the policies and practices of the court itself. Short sentences, the promiscuous mixing of prisoners of all kinds and ages, and what he called "congregated idleness" worked against every modern principle of penology, mocked the court and made it a "rogue's parliament." The prisoner was in jail, Eliot argued, because he hated work and loved bad company; the county obligingly provided him with both idleness and bad company in an environment where the neophyte could readily learn all the skills of the professional.

Eliot was as prepared with recommendations as he was with criticisms, and they ranged widely over the whole field of policies, practices and principles. In the area of policy, he advised classification of prisoners and segregated facilities for first offenders; use of the indefinite sentence, by which release would be granted only to the prisoner who deserved it; individualized study and treatment of criminals; and larger, regional penitentiaries in place of the numerous, small sheriff's bastilles. As to practices, daily exercise in the open air, solitary confinement in individual cells, constant supervision, hard fare and hard work would, he felt, abolish "congregated idleness" and turn prison life into a moral and educational experience that the criminal might have neither need nor desire to repeat. Most important of all was the principle of work, the key to reform and "the basis of both punishment and betterment." His insistence that prisoners learn a trade and earn their keep beyond bread and water was, Eliot believed, the surest refutation of those who might call him a sentimentalist. "I would have jail life hard and severe, with the minimum of comfort consistent with health, the materials of life fewest that humanity permits," he declared.[9]

Very little happened as a result of his preaching, and Eliot knew why. He was up against not only those who believed that ameliorating prison conditions was the same as pampering criminals, but against the vast bulk of public apathy which made him feel, as a responsible citizen, more guilty than the criminals whenever he visited the jail. Consequently, Eliot tried to get some men of influence on his side. In 1879 he called for a commission of inquiry and the cooperation of large taxpayers whose motives were "more businesslike" than his own. In 1888 he called for the creation of a prison commission or state board to study the problem of crime from first principles. It was not a particularly attractive reform movement, or as appealing to his wealthy friends as the cause of child welfare, but there were some allies and some responses.

---

[9] For the most representative sermons on the county jail or prison reform by Eliot, see especially the Oregonian, January 25, 1879; April 8, 1884; October 22, 1888; October 28, 1890. After the National Prison Congress designated the third Sunday in October as Prison Sunday, Eliot usually used that day to speak on some phase of penology.

Eliot once again received the support of the Oregonian. Harvey Scott often printed the full text of Eliot's prison sermons, and sometimes there was direct editorial support for Eliot's proposals. One editorial in 1884, for example, evaluated Eliot's denunciation of the county jail the day before as "none too strong," as the system was based on wrong principles, public indifference and political gamesmanship. It accused the sheriff of attempting to get all the boarders he could, since "the larger his hotel, the more profitable it is." Reformers ought to concentrate on getting local jails out of the hands of the sheriffs and into the hands of the state, the paper recommended. The whole vicious system had been changed in other places "through such discussions as Mr. Eliot [had] given to the enormities of the jail system."[10]

The collective proddings of Eliot and the Oregonian led to a grand-jury investigation in 1888. The Circuit Court of Multnomah County ordered an inquiry into the management and condition of the jail and of every public institution in the county. In carrying out its mandate, the jury solicited suggestions from citizens. The great majority of the recommendations it received had been "impractical" it reported, all but those "set forth by one who has made the workings of prisons a special study and whose judgment, therefore, is entitled to much weight." What followed as the jury's report to the court was a recapitulation of Eliot's pleas of the previous fifteen years. Bring the jail out from underground, it recommended; give the prisoners more space, classify them according to their backgrounds and crimes, abolish the "enforced, congregated idleness" that encouraged tramps and vagrants to make the prison their winter home, bad as it was, and impose penalties of hard labor in county quarries or city work gangs. These suggestions, the jury reported, it heartily approved and commended them to the attention of both the court and public.[11]

---

[10] Oregonian, April 9, 1884.

The report seemed at first like another purely verbal victory for Eliot, but action soon followed on two fronts. For one thing, some improvement took place in the jail itself, though not nearly to the extent or of the kind that either the jury or Eliot had called for. The county merely added several new wings, also underground, to cut down over-crowding. Surveying the effects of the improvements in his prison message of 1890, Eliot estimated that there was still

---

[11] *Ibid.*, January 20, 1889.

"hardly a worse jail north of the Mason and Dixon line in location, plan and unkeepableness." Not only was the whole system wrong, he repeated, but Portland's version was still "a low one of this wrong class."[12]

More encouraging than the minor modification of a bad facility was the formation of several supervisory organizations. The first of these was the City Board of Charities, organized in February 1889 by William G. Steel of the First Congregational Church as a "center of intercommunication between the various charitable agencies in the city." The initial thrust of this board was toward regulating charity rather than reforming institutions, and its stated purposes included coping with vagabondism, repressing mendicancy, prosecuting imposters, preventing waste of charitable funds, investigating applicants for relief and procuring work for the deserving poor. Because he and his congregation had been involved in charitable work for over twenty years, and because the need for charity was often closely related to the causes of criminality, Eliot endorsed the agency, participated in its organization and served subsequently as a vice-president and director.

---

[12] Ibid., October 28, 1890.

Within its first year, Eliot took an opportunity to turn the board's attention to larger works of reform.[13]

Eliot persuaded the City Board to invite the National Conference of Charities and Correction to meet in Portland at the conclusion of its annual fall meeting in San Francisco. Late in September 1889, thirty-two "Philanthropic Visitors," as the Oregonian styled them, arrived to discuss Oregon's need for social reform. Formal activities of the conference began with a mass meeting at the Tabernacle, at which Governor Sylvester Pennoyer presided. Eliot's keynote address, "Our State Work," was a decidedly somber appraisal of Oregon's institutional capabilities. Our state is young and our environment is virtually unspoiled, he told his audience, and yet "the dependent, the defective and the delinquent classes are slowly organizing without conscious organization."

---

[13] Scott, Portland, 368-369. Each year the First Unitarian Society set aside large amounts of money for charity. In 1872, for example, their benevolences went to the poor of Portland, war victims in France, victims of the Chicago fire, and victims of forest fires in Wisconsin and Michigan. See Minutes of the FUS, January 9, 1872. The following year, Portland suffered from a disastrous fire, but Eliot, a member of the Relief Committee, returned over $600 to Unitarians in St. Louis for reasons of civic pride. See William G. Eliot to TLE, August 3, 7, 18 and 27 and September 1, 1873 and January 11, 1874, WGE.

Oregon's institutional facilities were entirely inadequate to meet the growing burdens, Eliot continued, or to satisfy the consciences of sensitive individuals. Not only were they too traditional to meet the challenges of a new society in a new time, they suffered from a lack of trained insight and attendants, and, even more, from "lack of soul." Not only did they reflect all the ills peculiar to political appointment and change, their efforts were pegged at the level of relief rather than directed toward the cure of social ills. What Oregon desperately needed, he suggested, was a state board or commission of charities to coordinate the haphazard efforts of various groups and "elevate Oregon to rank with the best commonwealths of the nation." He hoped that the national delegates might "inspire and humble" Oregonians to such an undertaking. They had had opportunity to glimpse Oregon's natural beauties, Eliot suggested, but he hoped they would not just remember the scenery. "Remember us in our bonds," he concluded.

A number of distinguished authorities from the East followed Eliot to the podium during the sessions that followed. They unanimously endorsed the utility of such a board as Eliot had suggested and the feasibility of creating such an institutional regulator in Oregon. The last of the speakers especially, the

Reverend Fred H. Himes of Springfield, Illinois, was effusive in his compliments: "With such a governor as you have in Oregon, such a paper as The Oregonian and such a brave, energetic man as Dr. Eliot, there is no reason why you should not have everything you want."[14]

For a while, it looked as though Mr. Himes had been prophetic. The meetings were a stimulus to the local reformers, and the City Board appointed a committee of five men, including Eliot, to secure legislation creating a state board at the next session of the state legislature. The translation of oratory into law proved to be surprisingly easy, and House Bill 111 became law in February 1891 with virtually no opposition. It provided for a board of six members "to investigate all charitable and correctional institutions in the state, especially prisons, infirmaries, public hospitals, poor farms and asylums," as well as to review and pass on plans for all future institutions in those categories.[15] Stebbins congratulated Eliot on his achievement and suggested that the legislation had pushed Portland ahead of San Francisco both socially and politically, as a strong minority of Roman Catholics opposed such a state board in his city while "the immense powers of corruption in both parties" did not look with favor "on any scheme that proposed to make its chances less." Eliot's act, he concluded, was a model.[16] Stebbins's compliments were unfortunately as premature as the state board in Oregon was short-lived. With just as little opposition, the next legislature (1893) abolished the board.[17] Ostensibly it was reacting against the tendency to proliferate independent boards and commissions.[18] Actually, its action may have meant that the "immense powers of corruption" of which Stebbins spoke were also at work in Oregon.

---

[14] Oregonian, September 22, 1889. Among the Eastern religious reformers active in promoting conferences and boards for the coordination of charitable endeavors was Washington Gladden. For his work in Ohio, see Jacob Dorn, Washington Gladden: Prophet of the Social Gospel (Columbus, 1966), 268-286.

[15] Journal of the Senate (1891), 615, 645; Oregon Session Laws (1891).

The abolition of the state board did not daunt Eliot's determination to maintain some form of systematic, public surveillance over Oregon's charitable and correctional institutions. A voluntary group, the State Conference of Charities and Corrections, which Eliot had organized in his home in a preliminary way in June 1889 as a clearinghouse of ideas for social workers in the state, assumed some of the functions that the state board might have performed. After the turn of the century it organized more formally (February 18 and 19, 1902) and achieved the enactment of significant legislation relating to child labor and the treatment of the insane; it also promoted the formation of the Prisoner's Aid Society. When the Conference drafted him for its presidency in 1902, Eliot felt obliged to accept, though with some misgivings. "My chief objection to undertaking it," he wrote his wife, "is the lack of youthful enthusiasm, know too much etc." Yet, he offered enthusiastic leadership in the crucial position for over a decade.[19] Among the first efforts of his administration was an attempt to revive the State Board of Charities, but the bill to achieve that goal died in committee.[20]

---

[16] Stebbins to TLE, February 24, 1891.

[17] Journal of the Senate (1893), 622.

[18] Wilbur, Eliot, 71, 128.

---

[19] Ibid., 69-71; TLE to HRE, February 24, 1902. Among the religious leaders of Portland who assisted Eliot in the Conference was Rabbi Stephen Wise, who referred to Eliot as "the spiritual father of the Northwest." Stephen Wise, Challenging Years (New York, 1949), 9.

[20] Proceedings of the National Conference of Charities and Corrections, XXIX (1902), 91-92 (hereinafter, Proceedings) and Proceedings, XXX (1903), 95-96. Eliot was chairman of the Committee on Pulpit Supplies and the Finance Committee when the National Conference met in Portland in 1905.

The mental institutions of Oregon also attracted Eliot's attention, though he was less active in behalf of the insane than of the criminal. The need seemed less great and the cause less demanding, at least in the years when John C. Hawthorne's Oregon Insane Hospital was located in Portland. Hawthorne and his associate, A.M. Loryea, had founded the hospital in East Portland in 1861 and in addition to their private patients had contracted with the State of Oregon in 1862 to accept its mental patients at the rate of $12 per patient per week. It was a fairly high charge, but lower than the $3 per day that Hawthorne and Loryea received from their private patients, and for which the patients seem to have received exceptionally fine care by contemporary standards. Eliot was proud to have Dorothea Dix inspect the spacious grounds and airy buildings of the virtually self-sufficient asylum a mile east of the Willamette River.

Eliot began holding regular monthly services "of an unsectarian character" at the hospital shortly after Miss Dix's visit in 1869. He brought to the growing number of "anxious, clouded spirits" the "Gospel of comfort and hope" and received in return, as he judged, "exceptional approval on the part of inmates and officers."[21] Several women of his congregation joined him in attending the residents, and later the Christian Union of the First Unitarian Society made the welfare of the mental patients one of its special concerns. Dorothea Dix also retained an interest in the hospital and asked Eliot to keep her informed about its prospects. "Look at the Hospital for the Insane when you get home," she wrote him in St. Louis, "and let me know if all goes well. Try to keep it at Portland for the present--there will be an effort made at removal to Salem which will be premature."[22]

---

[21] TLE to Rufus Ellis, May 1, 1876.

There had been efforts to remove the Hospital to Salem almost from the inception of the state contract. Several Salem physicians had offered in 1866 to provide for the care of Oregon's mental patients at a unit cost of fifty-six cents a day. Letters to the Oregonian supported the doctors' proposal and accused Hawthorne and Loryea of fleecing the state through excessive charges while retaining allegedly cured patients to fatten their take. Governor Woods had recommended to the legislature in both 1868 and 1870 that such a transfer take place,[23] and Hawthorne pleaded with Eliot to use his influence with Miss Dix to forestall a move in which "the good and comfort of the insane will not be considered by those who are in the movement."[24]

---

[22] D. L. Dix to TLE, October 10, 1870.

[23] O. Larsell, "History of Care of Insane in the State of Oregon," Oregon Historical Quarterly, XLVI (December 1945), 296-309.

Investigations by visiting physicians, reporters and official state committees failed to substantiate charges that Hawthorne was abusing his position as proprietor of the only mental hospital in Oregon; their reports, in fact, suggested that his was one of the finest of such institutions in the West. As the number of state patients increased, however, pressures on the treasury became severe even though by 1870 Hawthorne had reduced rates to $6 per week per patient. Even at this lower figure, however, support for the 230 patients was costing Oregon $70,000 in gold annually by 1877, equal to 52% of the state's total income. The absence of building funds and the hindrance of the state's debt limitation kept the institution at Portland until the legislature in 1880 passed measures for the erection of an asylum at Salem to be supported by a special one-mill levy. After Hawthorne's death in February 1881, Eliot assumed leadership of a citizen's group to solicit information on plans for the buildings and qualifications for a superintendent.[25]

---

[24] J.C. Hawthorne to TLE, June 21, 1870.

Eliot again turned to Dorothea Dix. Miss Dix recommended a close friend, Dr. Calvin S. May of Danvers Lunatic Hospital, Massachusetts, as her personal choice for superintendent. May applied for the position and offered impressive references to support his application. At the eleventh hour, however, revelations of scandalous conduct in Dr. May's past negated his application and crushed Miss Dix. She nevertheless submitted to Eliot detailed plans to meet what she considered the essential requirements of Oregon's new asylum. It is difficult to determine just how influential Eliot was in the actual construction of Oregon's first public mental hospital, or just how much of his mentor's advice he was able to carry out.[26]

---

[25] Larsell, "Care of Insane," 309-311; Board of Trustees of the Hospital of the State of Connecticut to TLE, March 1881. The same legislative session (1880) had considered a measure (Senate Bill 36) to remove censorship over the correspondence of the insane, a provision that Eliot and his friends opposed because it would, in their estimation "cripple the usefulness of asylums." TLE, draft "to the Honorable Judiciary Committee, Eleventh Session, Oregon Legislature," October 1, 1880.

[26] D. L. Dix to TLE, January 18, March 16 and April 4, 1881; Calvin S. May to TLE, March 21 and June 15, 1881 and February 1, 1882; James Sturgis to TLE, February 24, 1882; Board of Trustees of the Hospital of the State of Connecticut to TLE, March 1881. As to the ultimate choice of superintendent, the first appointment went to Dr. Horace Carpenter, one of the Salem physicians who had

It is not difficult to ascertain Eliot's deep dissatisfaction with the way in which state institutions in general and the state hospital in particular were governed. In her reports to the National Conference of Charities and Correction in 1887 and 1888, Helen Spaulding, a member of First Unitarian and close associate of Eliot in charitable work, complained of gross political interference by Governor Pennoyer whose use of the spoils system had made a "clean sweep" of wardens, nurses and guards at the hospital.[27] This was one of the

---

offered in 1866 to care for the state's mental patients, then to Simeon Josephi, a former colleague of Hawthorne's. Josephi, in turn, resigned the day before the new governor, Sylvester Pennoyer, intended to relieve him for political reasons. Pennoyer's appointees included, among others, Harry Lane (1886-1891) who was "outraged" at the corruption associated with the management of his institution. See Larsell, "Care of Insane," 312-326, and Oswald West, "Reminiscences and Anecdotes: McNarys and Lanes," Oregon Historical Quarterly, LII (September 1951), 149-150.

[27] Proceedings, XIV (1887), 65-66 and XV (1888) 359-361. After criticizing Governor Pennoyer on several specific counts, Miss Spaulding, concluding her report of 1887, said: "The trouble with us in Oregon is that we do not appreciate the benefit which could result from a change in the methods of management of our public institutions. We need enlightenment. The benefits of a State Board need to be made known more thoroughly and effectively; and last, but not least, we need a class of officials whose aims are less selfish, less for the advancement of political fortunes and more for the best interests of the State."

principal reasons Eliot wanted a State Board of Charities. Politicians, he feared, needed to be closely watched by respectable citizens.

Eliot kept a sympathetic eye on the care of the insane both in Oregon and in Washington Territory. On his travels through Washington, he occasionally visited the old territorial asylum at Monticello, which he described as "very dirty," and the new institution at Steilacoom, where he visited every ward and "felt considerably depressed by it." After addressing the patients he was "so downcast by their condition that words [seemed] a mockery." The Christian Union of the First Unitarian Society continued to take a special interest in Oregon's mental patients, even after the transfer of the asylum to Salem. They sent individualized New Year's greetings to the residents one year, framed pictures for each ward the next.[28] Superintendent Lane thanked them for "brightening and aneliorating the sorrow of their mutual alienation" and commended Eliot for his "untiring interest in philanthropic works."[29]

---

[28] Wilbur, Eliot, 47; TLE to HRE, August 17, 1883. Eliot attended at least one session of the Washington Territorial Legislature (1875) in behalf of the insane of the region. See TLE to HRE, October 24, 1875.

[29] Harry Lane to TLE, January 8, 1888 and December 31, 1889.

Indians were a third category of social wards of concern to Eliot. Unlike the early Methodist, Presbyterian, Congregational and Roman Catholic missionaries in the Northwest, who directed their initial efforts toward the Indians and turned to the growing white communities only after the Indian missions proved a disappointment, Eliot was in Oregon for nearly ten years before he began seriously to consider the plight of the Indian. During that first decade his only contact with the Indian problem was through Henry Webster, the friend from his voyage to California in 1860, whom President Lincoln had appointed Indian Agent at Neah Bay. Webster's letters to Eliot were critical of federal Indian policy and of the attitudes of military commanders who supposedly regarded their wards as destined for extinction, a fate "that should not be interfered with." Webster's own fate as Indian Agent was sealed by the accusation that he had used his position to claim reserved lands for himself, and not even Eliot's intercession with his father's close friend, General William T. Sherman, could prevent Webster's removal "at the point of the bayonet."[30]

---

[30] H. A. Webster to TLE, November 8 and November 25, 1869; March 26, 1871; May 22 and 28 and July 10, 1873; C. W. Delano to General William T. Sherman, June 16, 1873.

With his appointment in 1875 as Oregon agent of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel among Indians and Others in North America, Eliot became more directly involved in the cause of the aboriginals. Even then, his work for the Society in the first years was primarily among "others," especially prisoners, insane Chinese, "abandoned women" and unchurched Caucasians. Only after the wide publicity given the resistance of Chief Joseph and the Nez Perces in the summer of 1877 and the depredations of hostile Indian bands during the Bannock War the following year did Eliot begin seriously to study and discuss the social and political issues underlying the hostilities. He began his public discussion, characteristically, with a sermon, "The Indian Question," which the Oregonian headlined on page one. Chief Joseph's succession of victories over Generals Howard and Miles had made it a timely topic.[31]

Yesterday it was the slave; today the Indian is "America's skeleton in the closet," Eliot began, urging his listeners to consider the complexities of the problem. Much of the trouble, he suggested, was the result of inherent tendencies, not only in the nature of the Indian and the clash of civilized and non-civilized societies, but in the nature of democracy as well, particularly in a changing civil service that was the "sum of all iniquities." Neither paper solutions nor war could adequately resolve the issues, he warned. Only changes in some basic conditions of both American government and Indian civilization could eventually bring progress toward resolution. It was imperative that during the lengthy period of change the public cultivate patience, avoid blame and "wait for the time and tide," while "missionaries of the right stamp" worked to elevate the life of the reservation.[32] For over a quarter century following this sermon, Eliot periodically sought both to publicize the shortcomings of federal policy and to "elevate the life of the reservation," as he had suggested.

---

[31] During the summer of 1878, the "scare" touched Eliot's own family, who were vacationing at Hood River. "Keep cool," Eliot wrote his wife; "you will have long notice to move, if necessary." TLE to HRE, n.d. 1878.

The main lines of Eliot's Indian work followed familiar patterns and principles. He projected education and work as twin redemptive paths for the Indian in his ascent toward civilization. His own functions would be to chart their upward progress by visiting reservations and keep their cause alive through public presentations of the issues. Eliot's reports to the Society over a period of twenty-five years reflected the difficulties that beset both Eliot and the Indians in changing conditions that were "inherent."

---

[32] Oregonian, July 17, 1877.

Eliot's faith in the power of education led him to support the Indian training school that Captain James Wilkinson established at Forest Grove in 1880. He visited the school soon after it opened, was inspired by what he saw and ventured to predict that "the practical solution of the Indian problem" would lie largely in such schools. Even the chiefs seemed convinced, he believed, that survival for their people required them to "fortify themselves with the arts of civilization" by which the sons would learn trades and the daughters would become "useful housewives." It was even more important to Eliot, however, that Indians learn the principles of chastity and industry that seemed to him to be utterly lacking in their tribal existence and that together could "save the better class of Indians if anything can."[33] Eliot visited the school at least once each year, also after it was moved in 1885 to Chemawa, five miles north of Salem. He strongly opposed the relocation, however, because he believed it, like frequent changes in the superintendency, was due to political intrigue and tended to promote discontinuity of program and decline in morale. His general assessment of the school was nevertheless positive because the institution rested upon the correct principle of industrial education for the Indian.[34]

---

[33] TLE to Society for the Propoagation of the Gospel among Indians and Others in North America (hereinafter, SPG), May 4, 1881 and May 4, 1882.

It was important to Eliot that Indian education emphasize manual training and industrial arts rather than impractical subjects, and he frequently critized reservation schools for the "inaptness" of their curriculum and lack of equipment and facilities for teaching trades. He feared, however, that reservation environment tended to cancel any benefits the Indian might derive from industrial training. "The most careful education of Indians, children and youth," he wrote in 1886, "is practically defeated by returning to the reservation where an artificial life of semi-idleness and non-responsibility exists, and where the ancestral types of examples have free play." Eliot found support for this view from many who, at the time, were advocating the end of the reservation system and the allotment of the lands in severalty to individual Indian families. Paradoxically, Eliot opposed the Dawes Severalty Act of 1887 because he thought it would find the majority of Indians unprepared for independence and leave them unprotected against "pauperization" and "demoralization." Only the long and patient road of vocational training, he believed, would enable the Indian to escape the reservation and make his way in the white man's world.[35]

---

[34] Ibid., April 16, 1886 and May 7, 1895.

Eliot's views on Indian welfare came principally from personal observation of reservations in the Northwest. By the turn of the century he claimed to have visited every reservation in the region, some more than once. Often he would stop off on a preaching tour to Seattle or Spokane, or en route east, to visit an adjacent reservation; occasionally he would schedule special trips to visit the less accessible tribes at Siletz or Grande Ronde. In every instance he would inspect the facilities, confer with the officials and address the Indians. He did not hesitate to point out what he believed were inadequacies or make suggestions for the improvement of instruction, fire protection, drainage or water supply. His chief concerns, however, were the "humanizing influences" available to the Indians, and his Society regularly sent books to the libraries of the reservation schools and pictures for the walls of rooms that he had noted as bare and uninviting. On one visit to Chemawa, for example, he recommended that the administration fill the larger rooms with pictures and reminders ("judiciously selected") of the nation and its place in the citizen's heart and life.[36]

---

[35] *Ibid.*, April 16, 1886, May 11, 1887, May 3, 1890 and June 1, 1894. Compare, for example, the views of H. L. Wells, who called the reservation system "a granite wall across the pathway leading to the elevation of the Indian race," and who promoted the inculcation of the white value system based on work, but who strongly supported the principles of the Dawes Act. See H. L. Wells, "The Indian School at Chemawa," *West Shore*, XIII (January 1887), 5-12.

Eliot believed that his presence was more valuable than his suggestions, however cordially officials seemed to receive them. For one thing, he did not come "officially," and his visits, therefore, might "awaken everyone connected with the Agency to a sense of interest taken by someone besides officials in what they [were] doing"; or they might "awaken some greater degree of watchfulness and zeal." He never seemed to sense, or reported to the Society that he sensed, that agents or administrators might have regarded him as a meddler or unwelcome interloper on their premises. His buoyant optimism concerning the efficacy of his inspections continued undiminished over the years, as his report of 1897 suggests:

> I have reason as heretofore to feel that my visits and volunteer inspections of reservation schools, with friendly suggestions and addresses, do marked good both directly and indirectly; chiefly the fact that such

---

[36] TLE to SPG, May 1, 1888, May 3, 1890 and May 8, 1891.

> are made outside of official circles, by citizens, affects the tone and discipline of both wards and curators of institutions to humanize relations between them and to increase the feeling of responsibility.[37]

Eliot's observations also affected the observer; they left upon him some deep impressions, sharpened as well as changed some of his convictions and prodded him into various kinds of activity. Among the largely visual images that lingered in his memory was the color and pageantry of ration day at Ross Fork near Pocatello, a spectacle he described in detail to several correspondents. What struck him most about the event was the peacefulness of it, when he had long imagined that the large gathering of Bannacks and Shoshones would require many troops of cavalry to keep order. Hardly a drunken or unruly Indian anywhere, he marveled; rather "all fat and good natured, painted and blanketed, scores of papooses, children and dogs."

His observations also led him to modify an old conviction that Roman Catholicism as a system was hopelessly sectarian and unprogressive. Eliot noted with amazement that at some Catholic reservations the effects of the discipline seemed to be more beneficent than expected. At Coeur d'Alene, for example, the sight of hundreds of Indians kneeling reverently at mass was in itself impressive; even more impressive was the fact that through their own labor these Indians had constructed a church and school valued at $30,000. At Tulalyp, in northwest Washington, also a Roman Catholic reservation, he found astonishingly modern facilities, a progressive superintendent and, unbelievably, coeducation in the classrooms. "A remarkable innovation for Catholics," he exclaimed, and he admitted to a concession: "I feel here as always when visiting any Catholic mission that whatever may be the defects of denominationalism, their work has conspicuous merits and furnishes example of consecrated philanthropic motives." Even at Fort Colville, where the Jesuits conducted two boarding schools, which he felt were "nonprogressive, mechanical and biased in instruction," he was moved by the affection with which the teachers treated their children, especially compared with teachers in the government schools.[38]

---

[37] Ibid., May 1, 1888, November 4, 1895 and April 27, 1897.

Eliot's inspection of Indian reservations reinforced his growing resentment toward political interference in social institutions. He had seen the effects of such interferences on other social agencies, and he found it endemic in the Indian service as well. Some of the developments at Forest Grove and Chemawa were unfathomable except as political moves, and what he saw at many reservations deepened his indignation at the pervasiveness of politics. Identifying the villain, however, was little consolation for the mismanagement of a score of reservations. From the beginning to the end of his inspections he complained unceasingly of the ill effects of the spoils system on Indian policy and its victims. Until there were basic changes in the method of selecting administrative personnel, he predicted, Indian welfare would continue to ride with a "succession of more or less well meaning experiments in which the great ends [were] sought by inadequate means," whereas the situation demanded "continuity of a program carried out over a long period by wise methods."[39]

---

[38] Ibid., May 1, 1888, May 1, 1896, November 1, 1896 and May 1, 1899; TLE to HRE, April 8, 1899.

Eliot found examples of incompetence everywhere. At Yakima, where the Methodist missionary, Father James Wilbur, had made the reservation "a model of order and progress," five inexperienced successors virtually wrecked everything that Wilbur had built, with "demoralizing results." It was partly attributable to the system itself, whereby the agent, "constantly crippled by the head office in

---

[39] Ibid., April 16, 1886.

Washington," lacked sufficient authority to deal with the exigencies of his local situation; it was partly the fault of the untrained personnel themselves. A new clerk arrived at Yakima the very day he did, "raw to the work or any other," he grumbled. At Siletz, everything had to be done over again after "careless and changing administrators." At Umatilla, he detected "half-hearted, listless officialdom and mere routine traditions," which, he felt, were "encouraged by our defective system of appointments and administration. "Civil Service reform is nowhere more needed than in the Indian department," he continued, and suggested that the Society memorialize Congress to that effect. At Grande Ronde, he cited the need for experienced inspectors who would listen to the local employees and "not be too readily tempted to apply the methods of advanced civilization to little feudal baronies."[40]

Eliot tried to do more for the Indians than visit their reservations, censure their guardians and file reports. He endeavored, first of all, to gain as broad an understanding as he could of both problems and solutions through study and research. While in the East in 1882 he visited the Indian training school at Hampton, Virginia, and he frequently cited examples of progressive methodology learned there. He joined the Indian Rights Association and diligently read its studies and reports, corresponding with the Association occasionally in reference to particular problems in the Northwest. "I am making a close study of Indian history and character, as well as the attitude of the government towards its savage wards," he reported to the Society in 1884, "and desire to stand in a relation to them which may enable me to to them good and assist in mediating, if occasion should ever arise, between them and any local injustice." He regularly attended institutes for Indian workers and frequently addressed the meetings. In 1894 he made a plea for efforts to attract sympathetic volunteers who might be able "to detach their own minds from preconceptions or assumptions"; in 1895 he commended the engagement of female matrons and teachers so as to bring to reservation schools more of a "home atmosphere" and thereby minimize institutionalism. These institutes were not only a source of enlightenment to him, but a tonic for his morale as well. He thrilled to the "many noble utterances made" and the earnestness of his colleagues in the work.

---

[40] Ibid., May 1, 1888, May 3, 1890, November 1, 1894 and May 7, 1895. In his remarks to the National Conference of Charities in Portland in 1905, Thomas N. Strong, the local chairman, said of the Indians: "We furnish the problem, the East furnishes the money and the ignorance, and the result is a most unhappy combination." Proceedings, XXXII (1905), 620. Unitarians as a denomination supported civil service reform. See Cooke, Unitarianism, 372-375.

Most encouraging to him, however, was the "universal faith manifested by those workers in the Indian himself and his capacity for enlightened, useful citizenship."[41]

Eliot attributed a major change in his own views to one such institute. He had argued for nearly twenty years that the reservations would inevitably undo any good a training school might do, and that educated Indians ought not return to them. At an Indian institute in Portland in 1898, William N. Hailmann, superintendent of Indian schools, spoke persuasively against the oft-repeated charges that "Indians usually lapse into barbarism after their return from training school." Eliot reappraised his own former assumptions, consequently, as "malicious and without foundation"; and his change of view came just in time for him to counter an assault against the utility of Indian education by the Oregonian.[42]

---

[41] TLE to SPG, May 1, 1884, May 3, 1890, November 1, 1894 and November 4, 1895.

[42] Ibid., May 1, 1898. Hailmann, Swiss-born advocate of kindergartens and the methods of Pestalozzi and Froebel in America, became Superintendent of Indian Schools in 1893 on the recommendation of William T. Harris, U.S. Commissioner of Education and a friend of Eliot's. His policies as superintendent included opposition to enforced attendance, corporal punishment and penal philosophy in Indian education and advocacy of vocational training, institutes for teachers, civil service reform and day schools (rather than boarding schools). His views led to his being "deprived of his position for

Indian education is "an impossible task," the Oregonian asserted in the fall of 1898. Criticizing the amount of money expended in comparison with the results achieved, the paper cited the hereditary character of the Indian and the reservation environment as insuperable obstacles in the reformer's path. Educators could never "bridge the chasm between savagery and civilization by the spelling book or arithmetic," the editor asserted, although he admitted that other alternatives were equally grim:

> The Oregonian is frank enough to say that it does not know. It has no hope or faith in any future for the Indian race. That it cannot stand before civilization and that it is destined to perish from the earth seems certain. Humanity requires that we do whatever may be done to soften for the Indian the unalterable decree of fate. Let us do our duty by all means; but there is no need to fool ourselves with the notion that any effort through education, or any other agency, is going to transform the Indian race and bring it up, even measurably, to the plane of our own civilization.[43]

These assertions were a challenge to Eliot's whole philosophy of life, and he did not let them pass without a vigorous rebuttal. The

---

political reasons against the protest of leading American educators and other prominent citizens" in 1898. See Evelyn C. Adams, American Indian Education (Moringside Heights, 1946), 61-62, and Allen Johnson et. al. (eds.), Dictionary of American Biography (22 vols., New York, 1928-1958), VIII, 90-91.

[43] Oregonian, October 11, 1898.

Oregonian has taken a "very pessimistic view," he wrote, a view which he felt his own credentials entitled him to challenge. His impressions from nearly thirty years of visitations, inspections and institutes contradicted the opinion that Indian heredity predestined Indian education to futility or that graduates of Indian schools were "never or rarely found among the relatively industrious or thrifty of their race." Although the Oregonian's arguments might balance the delusions of enthusiastic sentimentalists, they were ill-founded on a number of important points. For one thing, the Indians of the Pacific Coast were admittedly of a "lower type " than many in the interior or Eastern part of the country; secondly, the whites who lived adjacent to Indian reservations in the Northwest had been "critical and unfriendly" rather than helpful in forwarding the work. But most important, any apparent failures were due more to a "defective civil service" than to any kind of biological or cultural determinism. The reservations of the Northwest, Eliot asserted, had been all too frequently a "political dumping ground for exigent dependents upon senatorial favor who could not be disposed of nearer home."

As to charges that educated Indians inevitably reverted to type on reservations, a view that Eliot himself had only recently abandoned, systematic studies of returnees done at Hampton, Virginia, had demonstrated the falseness of this view and suggested instead that "returned students in time will be the leaders on every reservation." Rather than a target for ill-founded attacks, Indian education ought to be a work "in which every American should take pride" because it was a "progressive work" that introduced new reforms each year and produced results that were "humanizing and on the way to solve the relation of the state to its Indian wards, justly and along true evolutionary lines." Perhaps, Eliot concluded, the Oregonian was guilty of nothing so much as myopia by looking at the problem too narrowly. "The final object," he reminded the editor, "is to make the Indian an American citizen, merging him into the mass. Individual tribes may perish, and some localities fail in the work of rehabilitation," but, in the main, Indian education was an "avenue of moral and physical self-improvement" and the Oregonian might do well to support its objectives. He would appeal, Eliot concluded, "from the Oregonian ill-informed to the Oregonian better-informed."[44]

It is not demonstrable that Eliot wrought any marked changes in the treatment of criminals, insane or Indians in the Northwest.

---

[44] Ibid., October 20, 1898.

The most he seemed able to do was publicize the needs and wait for the day when impartial experts--having replaced party politicians--would place the care of social wards and the management of their institutions on a professional and nonpartisan basis. Meanwhile, it was important to prevent the descent of a new generation into the slough of dependency by elevating the moral tone of society. Eliot was to find as much of a challenge outside institutional walls as he had within.

CHAPTER IX

THE CALL TO SOCIAL REFORM

> We are here together, and on every intelligent, happy, healthy life is laid the solemn burden and privilege of showing others the way, removing stumbling blocks, proclaiming the Gospel of courage and brotherhood and helping the master workmen in a commonwealth, which, please God, here shall not be "an accident," a railroad station, a crossroads, a tavern or emigrant barracks--a stock yard of gold heaps, a corral of struggling humanity, grown huge by time or luck; but a city set on a hill that cannot be hid, a community with the glory of a mountain and sky and emerald forest and shining streams and oceans rolling to its feet, worthy to lead in commerce and useful arts, because subordinating these as means and instruments to the moral and spiritual welfare--the high freedom and happy calling of ministers of righteousness and citizens in the kingdom of a present heaven.
>
> Thomas Lamb Eliot, "A Sermon on the Times,"
> May 13, 1888

Among the traditions that Eliot brought with him to Oregon was a passion for public morality. Three considerations help account for his zeal. His generous estimate of man's capacity for choosing virtue over vice, if properly informed about the nature of the alternatives, prompted him to regard vice as ultimately vulnerable to the solvent of consecrated human effort. His inclusive view of the nature and obligations of the ministry, meanwhile, caused him to look upon the task of reforming man's earthly city as inseparable from that of preparing him for life in the heavenly abode. In an entirely different vein, Eliot's lingering, idealized impression of his father's exemplary ministry in St. Louis constituted a perpetual call to reform. The disposition to emulate the paternal pattern in his own time and place and to be a worthy bearer of the Eliot name committed him to involvement in social issues as decisively as any of his Unitarian ideals.

Eliot stated his reformist intentions to his congregation in one of his early New Year's sermons. Having repudiated the passivity of Oriental religions and extolled the majesty and importance of human beings as "co-workers with God," he spelled out the social implications for his audience with color, precision and unmistakable clarity:

> The nearest work for and with God is to raise the public standard of morality, to smoke out the hypocrites, to purify the air of the stench of bribery and time-serving, to cut in to the awful cancers of intemperance, unchastity and gambling, the Cerberus devouring with three heads and throat of brass the noble and the base in one common ruin. . . . By what lawless prerogative do you think to escape, or have your household escape, when the air is foul and thick with moral disease?[1]

---

[1] TLE, "Co-workers with God," January 1, 1871.

Though it was usual for Unitarian reformers to be involved in many crusades at one time, Eliot saw the necessity of establishing priorities, even among the short list of "cancers" that he had delineated for his congregation. In time, two issues emerged as pre-eminent concerns and received the largest share of his attention and righteous indignation: the liquor traffic and political corruption. Now one, now the other came to the fore, but there were close affinities between them, and Eliot frequently viewed them as one problem. Both held the community in a form of bondage and limited the freedom of the citizenry; both pandered to the lowest appetites in man and hampered evolutionary progress toward the Kingdom of God on earth; both tended to perpetuate and enlarge the vicious effects of their activities in succeeding generations. The shape of Eliot's career as a reformer can best be understood not by an enumeration of the large number of good causes with which he was at one time or another associated but by a closer examination of the two issues that commanded much of his attention.

Eliot's attitudes toward alcoholic beverages was largely a conditioned reflex developed in his youth. His father was one of the most vigorous of Unitarians in opposition to the liquor traffic and frequently preached against it. He asked his children to forswear all use of alcohol until they were twenty-one, and he attempted to impress his eldest son with the vicious consequences of drink by taking him to the bedside of a man dying of delirium tremens.[2] The character and conduct of drinkers whom he had observed on his early travels also filled young Eliot with repugnance, and in one of the debates of the Everett Lyceum he successfully argued the affirmative side of the question, "Ought the sale of ardent spirits, as a beverage, be prohibited by law?"[3]

Among the practical problems of Eliot's early ministry in Oregon was the use of wine in communion celebrations. One parishioner in particular objected to it, and Eliot sought alternatives.[4] He inquired of his cousin, John Dawes of San Francisco, whether any of the vintners of California could supply him with "unfermented wine."[5] One veteran dealer replied that

---

[2] Wilbur, Eliot, 38-39; William G. Eliot, "Annual Charity Sermon," Notebook 5, November 11, 1860, WGE. In 1848, William Eliot asked a close friend to please close the liquor department in his store because he did not have "courage enough to speak strongly against a thing which is approved and practiced by some of my very best friends." William G. Eliot, Notebook 1, n.d., 1848. In 1852, he called the liquor traffic the "greatest evil of all," and attributed nine-tenths of all crime to intemperance. William G. Eliot, Notebook 4, n.d., 1852, WGE.

[3] TLE, "Journal of the Everett Lyceum" (1858), January 29, 1858; TLE, "Trip to the Upper Mississippi" (1859), 37.

[4] Hilands, A Time to Build, 138.

[5] John G. Dawes to TLE, May 9 and May 16, 1873.

Eliot's query had opened up to him "a new volume in the wine business," but that even if he could supply him with "boiled wine," Eliot would find it unsatisfactory because it would be devoid of taste and aroma.[6] In spite of William Eliot's suggestion that his son be "temperate in temperance and not admit the fanatical objection to communion wine," Eliot opted for the use of grape juice in the sacrament.[7]

Eliot's chief objections to alcohol were social rather than sacramental, however, and he seized every opportunity to point up the havoc it wreaked. His rhetorical arguments, buttressed by an imposing array of economic, sociological and physiological facts and statistics, centered about convincing his audiences that liquor and its minions were a costly blemish on any community. While Eliot's opposition to "ardent spirits" was constant throughout his parish years, there were three rather distinct periods of heightened activity, in each of which he played a role and advocated measures somewhat different from the others. The general tendency, however, was for him to move from voluntarism toward forms of compulsion that seemed wholly at variance with the individual freedom he otherwise advocated so vociferously. Legalistic religionists might have found repression compatible with their general outlook, but for liberals like Eliot, the cause of prohibition presented an uncomfortable paradox.

---

[6] M. S. Whitney to TLE, May 2, 1873. Instead of "boiled wine," Whitney sent Eliot a subscription to the Wine Dealer's Gazette, of which he was editor, and, to balance the scale, a subscription to the Sacramento Rescue, "a radical temperance paper" with which he had "an occasional tilt."

[7] William G. Eliot to TLE, April 27, 1873. Eliot occasionally used brandy for medicinal purposes. See TLE to HRE, April 30, 1872 and September 11, 1874.

The first significant instance of temperance agitation involving Eliot was the Praying Crusade of 1874. The phenomenon--it was more an enthusiasm than a movement--first appeared in Ohio early in the year and moved rapidly westward. By February the first inchoate rustlings of activity were discernible in Oregon. On March 10, six ministers--Medbury, Atkinson, Izer, Eaton, Lindsley and Eliot--called a meeting at the First Baptist Church and, according to Malcolm Clark, "harangued, agitated and uplifted the fifty women present." The meetings continued daily thereafter, and at each the audiences were "larger and more fevered" than before. On March 16, the Women's Temperance Prayer League was formally organized in the Taylor Street Methodist Church. Two days later the League began dispatching appeals to saloon keepers to discontinue their business and soliciting pledges of abstinence from every male in sight. On March 23, having vowed to "carry the war into the camp of the enemy," a contingent of women besieged Walter Moffett's Webfoot Saloon. For over three weeks there were daily demonstrations and confrontations and an occasional eruption of violence.[8]

Eliot had helped touch off the excitement, and he felt partially responsible for the direction it took. He had been a frequent participant and occasional speaker at the union meetings, but he was not comfortable with the emotional excesses and public displays that seemed to distract from rather than promote the cause of sobriety. Etta Eliot summed up the dilemma in a letter to her mother:

> The temperance movement produces great excitement, and I hope will do some permanent good. The "Revival" sort have made themselves so prominent in it, and have made it so nearly like a Methodist Revival, with a difference, that it is hard for quiet minded folk to do even what they would.[9]

---

[8] Malcolm H. Clark, Jr., "The War on the Webfoot Saloon," Oregon Historical Quarterly, LVIII (March 1957), 48-62. Clark bases his article on a letter from Frances Fuller Victor to O. C. Applegate. By 1874, George Atkinson seemed willing to cooperate with Eliot in reform work. The following October, Etta reported, Dr. and Mrs. Atkinson had paid "a very pleasant call" on her. HRE to TLE, October 5, 1874.

[9] HRE to Abigail A. Eliot, April 4, 1874. Eliot's journals reveal that he attended or addressed temperance meetings fourteen times during February, March and April 1874.

Nor was it reassuring that Eliot's good friend, Abigail Scott Duniway, the single-minded suffrage crusader, berated the Prayer Leaguers for having allowed "boy preachers. . . in their silly zeal. . . to have commanded you to be content to work as outlaws."[10] The fever declined after temperance candidates were soundly trounced in the spring elections, and Eliot henceforth directed his zeal into less frenzied channels.

During the decade that followed, Eliot gave such energy as he could to the quiet promotion of temperance.[11] It was a period, however, during which two extended leaves of absence and the building of a new church left little time for concentrated efforts. After his return from Europe in the spring of 1877, he regularly attended the Open Temperance Meetings which his substitute, Edward I. Galvin, had initiated during his absence and evaluated the well-attended weekly meetings as "the most sensible and thorough work of this kind."[12] He also quietly forestalled the annual bout of intemperance associated with the Mechanic's Fair by buying out the liquor concessionaire for the festival of 1879. He paid the license holder $200 and the Fair an additional $205 with the understanding that the space might be used for any activity except drinking. Funds came from a subscription list that he headed with his own pledge of $25 and circulated among his friends.[13]

---

[10] Abigail Scott Duniway, New Northwest, July 17, 1874, cited in Clark, "Webfoot Saloon," 61.

[11] This included preaching occasionally on the subject and attending meetings of such groups as the Lady Friends of Temperance. Of one of Eliot's temperance sermons during this period, his father wrote that it expressed his "sentiments exactly throughout." William G. Eliot to TLE, March 28, 1874. See also Isaac Dillon to TLE, May 31, 1875.

A second period of heightened temperance agitation commenced early in 1883 as a result of a revolt of Portland's liquor dealers. On March 9, 1883, the Common Council passed an ordinance levying a license fee of $300 per annum on all barrooms and drinking shops and prohibiting the sale of liquors without a license. A month later the council raised the fee to $500 and increased the penalties for noncompliance.[14] The dealers were enraged and agreed collectively to ignore both the ordinances and the "High License" they required. Eliot, in turn, incensed at what he regarded as a flagrant disrespect for law, quickly gathered over six hundred signatures to a petition of support for the council. The entire list of names appeared in the Oregonian under the following resolution:

---

[12] TLE to Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, April 22, 1878; E. I. Galvin to TLE, December 25, 1876. On his report to the First Unitarian Society in 1878, Eliot commended the "catholicity and moderation" of the meetings. Minutes of the FUS, January 8, 1878, FUS.

[13] H. B. Nicholas to TLE, October 16, 1879; Henry Weber to TLE, October 17, 1879; TLE, draft to the Directors of the Mechanic's Fair, October 16, 1879. The subscription list included the names of all the directors of the Fair.

[14] Portland, Oregon. Charter and General Ordinances in Force, September 1886 (Portland, 1886), 104, 542.

> We the undersigned citizens of Portland, do heartily endorse your action in passing ordinance #3744 and will cooperate with, and support you in maintaining and strictly enforcing, its provisions.[15]

All signs pointed to a contest of strength in the municipal elections the following June, and Eliot stood ready to conscript the forces of law and morality.

Eliot's first recourse, quite predictably, was to oratory, and on April 22 he formulated the order of battle for his congregation, and, via the Oregonian, for the community:

> The people are now summoned to a contest representing law and order, as against an organized rebellion of over a hundred men, representing two-thirds of a guild or trade in intoxicating drink, who have deliberately set themselves to defy or obstruct the law making power, and so doing have forced an issue away from any special question, such as temperance and intemperance, good or bad policy, and are warring against government itself.

---

[15] Oregonian, April 19, 1883.

Personally, he conceded, he was opposed to licensing altogether, because "making drinking over bars respectable does not appear to me a permanent step forward in the social well-being." He favored total abstinence by individuals and the ultimate elimination of all liquor traffic by legislation. But in this instance, the "larger principle" of law and order was the overriding issue and the crisis sufficiently grave to subordinate his personal feelings. He hoped, therefore, that even the most convinced prohibitionist could vote for "High License" in this instance lest public apathy allow the "political wire-pullers" pleading the cause of personal liberty to subvert government in Portland and allow the city to follow in the paths of Chicago or Cincinnati, or Boston, where in a recent election 6,000 stay-at-home voters had "turned out the best mayor the city had ever had." Calling on all elements to use all the means at hand--votes, persuasion, rallies--to fight the conspiracy, he warned of the consequences of defeat: "Break up moral inertia or the nation dies at its own hand."[16]

It was a "clear issue" in every way, the Oregonian agreed, rising to support Eliot and the reformers. Like Eliot, the paper saw the issue as between two disparate elements of the population and hoped that the "decent part of the community" would rise to triumph over "an element which with boasts and threats has arrayed itself against authority." Like Eliot, the daily warned good citizens not to underestimate the determination or the strength of its foe. The saloonkeepers, it knew, were "raging mad" and willing to use all the "villainy, cunning and money" at their disposal to "wrest government from the clean hands which now hold it and make it a support of vice and disorder." And by sheer numbers, the keepers of Portland's 162 saloons, together with their employees, suppliers, patrons and retainers, including "gamblers, pimps and thieves," constituted a formidable host of voters. Like Eliot, the Oregonian foresaw the triumph of moral order: "In the great contest between right and wrong, right always wins," it assured, "and it will win in Portland."[17]

---

[16] TLE, "The Real Issues Before the Portland People Now and at the June Election," Oregonian, April 23, 1883.

Such confident support from the press was heartening, and not to be outdone by the Oregonian's moral fervor, Eliot took to the pulpit the following Sunday with an enlarged field of vision. "Well," he asserted,

---

[17] Oregonian, April 25, 1883.

> the Western States are actually on fire, morally and politically, with this Drink question. Those who are accustomed to see this wave of temperance agitation come and go, are amazed to find that this time the agitation has come and will not go. The conviction I have formed from being on the ground, listening, reading or journeying, is that an immense moral crisis is at hand in the Western states.

From his perspective, he told his congregation, he was able to observe the rising flood tide of a "great moral storm," the "greatest since the anti-slavery agitation." From the rural heartland of America, from Iowa, Illinois, Kansas, Ohio and Missouri, came evidence that all over the United States, but especially in the West, the "moral force of the countryside" was rising to challenge the propensity of large cities to bow in obeisance to the liquor trade, that "vast law-defying, corrupting curse, which, not contented with secretly undermining the homes and schools and churches is combining itself to control legislation and . . . openly defy the law." The wonder, he concluded, "is that the world has so long tolerated this dreadful instrument of Hell!"[18]

As election day neared, Eliot decided to take his case directly to the "political wire-pullers." Two days before the balloting, he spoke to the Democratic city convention in behalf of the citizen's committee supporting the high license policy. It was the first time during his sixteen years in Oregon that he had addressed a political convention, he told the delegates, and he called their attention to the party record in states where Democrats had favored stringent controls over the liquor traffic. Of special significance to himself, he noted, was the case of Missouri, his native state, where the Democratic majority had supported a movement that put on the state statute books "one of the most stringent high license and local option laws in our whole land--far more severe than Portland." He hoped that the good citizens of Portland of both parties could see the benefits of "non-partisan disinterestedness in moral issues" and nominate men of "character and dignity" for the council.

---

[18] TLE, "The Temperance Question. How Things Look at the West," April 29, 1883.

Eliot could have saved himself the effort. As soon as he had finished speaking, one reporter observed, Ben Norden, a party boss, leaped to his feet, feigning great emotional enthusiasm. Having "winked with one eye at Bill Watkinds, with the other at Tim Stapleton," and biting his lips "to suppress emotion," he solemnly suggested that the only way in which the convention could adequately consider Eliot's remarks, "fraught with such serious and important results," would be to adjourn until the following day. If they selected their candidates without due regard to the feelings of the citizens' committee, Norden concluded, the Democrats might "militate against the interests of the grand old party [sic] these delegates represented."[19]

The real reason for adjourning was patently obvious by the time both conventions had concluded their business the following day. "Old rings still control the old parties," the Oregonian proclaimed. By mutual agreement and a peculiar version of non-partisanship, it seemed, leaders of each party had nominated party wheelhorses in wards they were certain of winning and reform candidates in wards they were likely to lose. Each ticket was thereby baptized with a sprinkling of reformers and an aura of respectability, while habitual voting patterns assured victory to the candidates of the bipartisan "ring." Lest anyone misread the intent of party bosses, however, the Democratic platform was crystal clear. It favored individual liberty, a "reasonable" license fee for drinking establishments and the enforcement of law and order through the faithfulness of municipal officers rather than through the exactions of high license.[20]

---

[19] Oregonian, June 16, 1883. Eliot had also attended the Republican City Convention the day before, but his contribution there is unclear. Although he apparently did not speak, the wishes of the citizens' committee were known, and the Republicans had agreed to consider them. See TLE, "Journal" (1883), June 11-18, 1883.

It was all too much for Eliot and the citizens' committee as they gathered late the same evening to hear the results of the party caucuses. After much deliberation, the Oregonian reported, Mr. Eliot, representing the more than six hundred signers of the resolution favoring high license, stepped forward to make an appeal. Pointing to the "collusion between the disreputable elements of the two political parties acting in secret council," he urged citizens to cast votes for men in either party "who represent law and order and an economical city government." Lest there be any confusion over who was who, Eliot named the respectable candidates and challenged "the better class of voters of both parties. . . to defeat the liquor association and the law-defying elements in our midst."[21]

Reform had allies. The Women's Christian Temperance Union of Portland had scheduled a public convention for the weekend with Frances Willard as featured speaker. Eliot invited her to be his house guest and cancelled his own services on election eve in order that his people might hear her address at the Taylor Street Methodist

---

[20] Ibid., June 17, 1883.

[21] Ibid.

Church.[22] The Oregonian once again stood with the reformers, endorsing the slate of the citizens' committee and condemning the connivance of both parties in rigging their tickets "to gull superficial observers." Good citizens will "repudiate the whole proceeding gotten up to place the city government in the hands of the free whiskey ring," Harvey Scott advised.[23]

For Eliot and his citizens' committee, for the Oregonian, and for the good ladies of the W.C.T.U., the results of the election were disappointing. Candidates of the liquor interests won contests in two of the three wards, and although "respectable men" still dominated the council (six to three), the outcome seemed to constitute a public ratification of corruption. Apparently, the Oregonian concluded, the "respectable and law-abiding classes" had not been moved deeply enough to counter the effective way in which the "ring" bought and repeated votes "with open shamelessness." Moreover, two operators of "unlicensed dives" were now enrolled among the "city fathers." It was indeed a sad day for Portland when the "immoral, vicious and disorderly classes" had been able to best the "quiet, respectable and law-obeying population" at the polls. The only remedy left, Scott suggested, was the removal of the liquor question beyond the reach of the "voting rabble of the city" by looking to the country, "where morality and virtue are in the ascendant."[24]

---

[22] Ibid.; Frances Willard to TLE, May 1, 1883, and May 17, 1884. Miss Willard accepted the invitation with appreciation for Eliot's advocacy of a cause of which his father was "so glorious a defender," and later thanked him for the "halcyon days. . . spent beneath the roof of that ideal home."

[23] Oregonian, June 18, 1883.

The liquor issue did not die with the election, either in Eliot's mind or in his public discussions. For one thing, William Eliot kept writing to his son throughout the summer of his own nose-to-nose encounters with the liquor interests of St. Louis and of his determination to press the fight until he had won. "It is the reform question of the day," he reminded his son, "and will not down until clear victory is gained. I, too, may get deeper into it yet, but have already enlisted for the war." Thomas Eliot could not easily dismiss paternal zeal of this sort, or the heroic challenges that continued to flow out of St. Louis. "It is 'God or Baal,' life or death--a moral strife like that against slavery," William Eliot exulted, somewhat forgetting his own neutral position in the earlier phases of the previous contest. Nor could the son ignore the implicit request for moral support in the father's struggle: "a victory in Oregon would be a commanding influence here," William Eliot suggested; "the stars of modern salvation rise in the West."[25]

---

[24] Ibid., June 19, 1883.

There were other reminders, both public and private, of the threat that alcohol posed to good morals. There had been many incidents, the Oregonian reported, in which unlicensed proprietors were able to evade the penalties of the high license law by tying up their cases in appeal and endless rounds of "legal quibbling."[26] There was the report of George Atkinson to the National Conference of Charities and Correction in which Atkinson cited the "crushing burden" of intemperance upon Portland and Oregon and called for its elimination as a "radical necessity."[27] To the general picture were added the experiences of personal friends and acquaintances. "Ad Bachman's failure is the old story of conventional character," he wrote to his wife, "drink, gambling and 'they all do it.' May God have mercy on his soul after damning him soul and body for a while. The [liquor dealers] who do these things don't suffer much here, at least in conscience, and soon get their poor creditors off'n their minds."[28]

---

[25] William G. Eliot to TLE, June 27, July 15, August 9 and September 11, 1883, WGE.

[26] Oregonian, July 9, 1883. Eliot responded to this editorial with a letter to the Oregonian (July 13, 1883), commending the paper for the way in which it had kept the people informed and aroused about "the most formidable threat against good government." He also pleaded with the legislature to pass a local option law so that communities that wished to do so might "exclude saloons as a public nuisance," and he pleaded with liquor sellers to get out of a trade in which many, he believed, were simply "dragged along."

[27] Proceedings of the National Conference of Charities and Correction, X (Madison, 1884), 158.

As Eliot continued to explore the vexing interrelationships between liquor traffic, personal freedom and public responsibility, he began to shift his views in favor of legal prohibition. Disillusionment with the failure of moral suasion to dent the political armor had brought him to what he regarded as the only viable alternative. He documented his conversion in a sermon in the fall of 1883:

> Ten years ago I hesitated to give my voice for prohibition as a practical principle, however much I might have wished it in theory, doubting as I then did whether the trials made of it were effective in checking the evil, but now I have learned to recognize that prohibition has a tendency to prohibit, which is all that we can ask; that it educates the public sentiment, that it increases in efficacy with every added year of its application, and is the form of legislation that the liquor interest chiefly fears. . . . The time is ripe, the hour has come, with the men and women rising up to lead.[29]

---

[28] TLE to HRE, October 27, 1883.

[29] TLE, "Temperance Sermon," in Questions of the Hour (n.p., n.d.).

The same emphasis appeared in Eliot's essay, "The Drink Question," which he presented to the Pacific Coast Conference of Unitarian and other Liberal Churches in San Francisco in November 1885. The essay, on which he had worked feverishly throughout the fall, gave hints not only of his own recent reading in political economy but of the unmistakable imprint of William Eliot's thought and experience as well. It was a closely reasoned and elaborately buttressed argument for individual abstention, social prohibition and political action. "The Drink Question will never be adequately met except as the result of a series of conflicts at the polls," he asserted. The favorable outcome of these conflicts would depend upon what he called "the natural polarity of progressive and non-progressive forces--of good and evil." Drawing once again upon his father's "close and prophetic" analogy between the crusades against slavery and alcohol, he traced the dialectical development of the liquor agitation through various levels to an ultimately political settlement. Because of the political entrenchment of the liquor interests, he concluded, reformers would finally have to fight on the field that their opponents had chosen and continually push the restrictions to higher and higher ground until they achieved the final goal of "prohibition on a national dimension."[30]

The first opportunity for Eliot to work for the direct adoption of his theories came in the election of 1887. For this contest, various temperance organizations of Oregon had combined to win from the legislature a constitutional amendment "interdicting the manufacture and sale of intoxicating drink."[31] While Eliot acknowledged that he was "stirred up about temperance matters," he admitted also that he "hardly knew where to take hold" in helping to promote popular ratification. It's the fate of knowing too much all around," he explained.[32] He did decide, however, to cooperate all he could with the efforts of other churches by urging Portlanders "to do their best in the temperance crisis now upon us . . . to be regularly found in the temperance meetings . . . and to inaugurate an advance all along the line."[33]

---

[30] TLE, The Drink Question; in Some Familiar Aspects: and in the Light of Historic Probabilism (n. p., n. d.). In the previous presidential election, Eliot had dismissed Blaine and Cleveland as "two suspicions" and endorsed the candidacy of John P. St. John, the Prohibitionist. His close friend, William Lloyd Garrison, Jr., had done the same, for the same reason, "supersensitiveness about the moral character of the candidates" and "support of the temperance movement which underlies self-government." William L. Garrison, Jr., to TLE, November 6, 1884. See also Eliot's sermon on the election, "Between Two Suspicions," Oregonian, October 21, 1884. On Eliot's conference essay, the roots of some of his ideas may be seen in letters from his father: William G. Eliot to TLE, September 14, 1885; October 26, 1885 and March 25, 1886, WGE. Eliot was pleased with the reaction to his paper, as he noted to his wife: "My Drink paper made an 'impression' and has done more than I hoped for. I rather like it myself."

[31] Oregonian, October 27, 1887.

Eliot also enlisted his pulpit in the campaign. His own feelings and "conscientious study for many years" required no less of him, he explained to his congregation. His principal sermonic effort, "The Proposed Amendment," delivered twelve days before the election, was essentially a popular restatement of his conference essay of two years previous. Five main ideas permeated his argument. First, Oregonians had to understand that the target of this amendment was nothing less than the "liquor power which aims to control the complete public administration for its benefit." Second, the first line of attack is and ought properly to be "moral suasion." Third, even the most dedicated of moral persuaders such as the W.C.T.U., for example, needed the support of law. Fourth, prohibitory laws would eventually become effective because of their "tendency to prohibit," a fact attested by the vigorous opposition of "the trade." Fifth, the decided advantage of state-wide prohibitory laws would lie in the mobilization of the countryside in the crusade "to save the cities from themselves," by marshaling the virtue of the hinterlands against the vices of the metropolis. "The State," he asserted, "is needed to govern the city, and not the city the State."[34]

---

[32] TLE to HRE, October 21, 1887; HRE to TLE, October 29, 1887. Etta replied, "I sympathize with you about the great difficulty of knowing what to do in Temperance work--as you say it is the penalty of 'knowing too much.'"

[33] Circular, "To the Christians of Portland," enclosed in TLE to HRE, September 30, 1887. Eliot noted on it, "I shall work with them all I can."

Unfortunately for Eliot and his allies, the Oregonian opposed prohibition in general and this amendment in particular, and it pulled out all its editorial stops in support of its position. Prohibition as a tactic, it asserted, had failed or was failing wherever tried in the United States; its introduction in Oregon would eliminate a significant source of state revenue without eliminating the liquor traffic; it would tend to discriminate against those of Oregon's immigrant population who "enjoy having a pitcher of beer on the table"; it would attempt to enforce "compulsory total abstinence"; it would demoralize the population, weaken respect for law and "make men none the worse for breaking it." Two other arguments seemed almost to be directed specifically at Eliot. Citing Kansas and Iowa, two of the states that Eliot was accustomed to advance as successful examples of prohibition, the Oregonian labeled them "examples to be shunned." Oregonians, it advised, living as they did in a seaboard, commercial state with totally different interests and diverse population, "should exhibit more intelligence, discrimination and wisdom than rural and provincial communities." Nor should Oregonians believe, the paper continued, that all respectable people favored prohibition. Among the long list of dissenters was a considerable number of very respectable Unitarians, including James Freeman Clarke, Horatio Stebbins and Frederick Henry Hedge.[35] Eliot's reaction to the editorial was a curious mixture of pain and pride, as he noted to his wife: "The Oregonian does hit hard and gains as always the surface victory; but it evidently fears me or wouldn't cross swords so often."[36]

---

[34] TLE, "The Proposed Amendment," Oregonian, October 27, 1887. Eliot sent a copy of the sermon to his wife, noted that he had made "no bad mistakes" in delivering it and was happy that it read better than he expected. "It's a difficult theme and a great problem. I shall be surprised neither way at the vote."

---

[35] Oregonian, November 8, 1887.

[36] TLE to HRE, November 18, 1887.

The outcome of the balloting was never really in doubt, as Eliot himself had suspected. "I do not expect the amendment to pass," he wrote to Etta on election day, and it did not pass.[37] The prohibitionists were, in fact, annihilated--19,172-7,985.[38] But, as always, Eliot managed to salvage a spark of hope from the ashes of defeat. "I think the canvass will bear fruit in increased thought and some kind of restrictive measures," he wrote as the results were being announced, and added the following day, "Prohibition ticket is defeated, but has the moral victory always."[39] Actually, it was a severe blow for temperance forces in the state. The Temperance Alliance, one of the key elements in the Oregon Temperance Party coalition that had promoted the amendment, expired immediately, while other groups remained enfeebled for much of the remainder of the century. It would be seventeen years before another prohibitionist measure would appear on a ballot in

---

[37] Ibid., November 8, 1887.

[38] John E. Caswell, "The Prohibition Movement in Oregon," Oregon Historical Quarterly, XXXIX (September 1938), 261.

[39] TLE to HRE, November 9 and November 10, 1887. The Oregonian, November 9, 1887, said, "Defeat is creditable to the good sense of the people of Oregon."

Oregon, and then in the form of local option legislation.[40]

For Eliot himself, there were optional routes to the broader goal of public morality. Since his days as school superintendent he had become increasingly aware of weaknesses in the electoral system that enabled political cliques to manipulate elections to their own ends; his experiences in the temperance wars deepened his suspicion of the undemocratic nature of voting procedures. If the moral issues were to be resolved at the polls, as he concluded they had to be, reform had to begin with the polls themselves. It was a matter of putting ballots before bottles, procedural before substantive reform issues. Not only would the entire system of election rules have to be overhauled for the sake of order and honesty, but women, that enormous company of likely allies, would have to be given the franchise.

The origins of Eliot's convictions about women's suffrage are only dimly discernible. There are no indications that his father had made it a moral issue, as he had with alcohol, and

---

[40] Caswell, "Prohibition Movement," 261. The local option amendment narrowly won (43, 316-40, 198) in 1904, and it was another decade before a statewide prohibition amendment was adopted. For a summary of this development see Caswell, "Prohibition Movement," Oregon Historical Quarterly, XL (March 1939), 64-82.

William Eliot's own public utterances on feminism were somewhat ambiguous. He was, he often claimed, a "natural conservative" who regarded the roles of wife and mother as most naturally appropriate for women and who, as late as 1875, endorsed women's suffrage "almost against [his] will." The chief argument in favor of the movement, he submitted, was its likely tendency to prevent society from "falling under the control of ignorant and reckless masses, whether black or white, native or foreign." William Eliot feared "ignorant or irresponsible suffrage," but he preferred to raise restrictions on the basis of education and property rather than on gender.[41] "Surely," he wrote to the voters of Massachusetts, urging them to enfranchise women for presidential elections, "there is no dictate of justice to exclude from direct representation those who pay taxes and have everything at stake. Surely there is no wisdom in excluding from the polls that part of the community which has the deepest interest in the maintenance of good order."[42]

---

[41] William G. Eliot, "Woman's Work and Education in America, Read at Sedalia before the Missouri State Teacher's Association, December 28, 1870, and Published by their Unamimous Request"(n.p., n.d.); William G. Eliot, Notebook 8, February 16, 1875, WGE.

[42] William G. Eliot, "Missouri to Massachusetts," unidentified newspaper clipping, Notebook 9, January 17, 1876, WGE.

Thomas Eliot was not as reserved in his espousal of feminism as his father, though he, too, tended to regard women's suffrage as a step to other reforms rather than purely as an end in itself. He joined the local women's suffrage association shortly after his arrival in Portland, played host to Susan B. Anthony on her visit to Oregon in 1871 (Eliot was, she said, a "tower of strength" on that occasion), and went often on public record in pulpit and print as "in favor of the suffrage for women unqualifiedly." Their enfranchisement, he declared, was both "a fundamental right and a duty" and the means by which they might "progressively help to build up the institutions of civilization."[43]

In espousing women's suffrage as a useful means for achieving other reforms, particularly prohibition, Eliot diverged sharply from the views of Oregon's pre-eminent suffragette, Abigail Scott Duniway. Mrs. Duniway, who had begun her crusade with the publication of the New Northwest in 1871, was chiefly interested in freeing women from economic and legal serfdom and regarded the involvement of feminism with other reforms, especially prohibition, as harmful to the cause of women's rights. Her chief fear of making women's suffrage a "tail to the prohibitionist kite" was that it would enroll more anti-prohibitionists against suffrage than prohibitionists for it. She preferred detached, quiet, local educational campaigns to "spectacular efforts" that would only "arouse the ballot-armed opposition of the entire state."[44]

---

[43] TLE, draft to editor of the Oregonian, November 2, 1910 (?); he also described himself to James Freeman Clarke in 1869 as "a suffrage-for-woman man." TLE to James Freeman Clarke, July 5, 1869. Susan B. Anthony to TLE, May 17, 1901.

In spite of their divergent goals, Mrs. Duniway held Eliot in high esteem. He had been her second visitor at the offices of her publishing venture (her brother and chief critic, Harvey Scott, editor of the Oregonian, had been the first)[45] and unequivocally and publicly endorsed her cause at the outset. She, in turn, invited Eliot to speak at her rallies ("the design," she said, "is for brief speeches and plenty of them") and frequently solicited contributions from him as one "who has never failed us in the past."[46] Others of Portland's clergy were privately sympathetic but, like Aaron Lindsley of First Presbyterian, "would not espouse the cause publicly"; Eliot and George Greer, Unitarian minister in Tacoma, alone offered her open support.[47]

---

[44] Abigail Scott Duniway to TLE, July 26, 1910. Mrs. Duniway records her impressions of the women's suffrage movement in Oregon and her own role in it in Path Breaking. An autobiographical History of the Equal Suffrage Movement in Pacific Coast States (Portland, 1914).

[45] Duniway, Path Breaking, 32. She called Eliot "my beloved, honored and Christian friend" and said of his contribution: "I honor him beyond power of words to express as one who has ever been faithful to my strenuous endeavors, who has always forgiven my blunders and commended whatsoever of well-doing I have been capable." She was not so lavish in praise of most other clergymen.

Somewhat paradoxically, Eliot also enjoyed good relations with leaders of the National Woman Suffrage Association, such as Susan B. Anthony and Lucy Stone, whose highly-publicized and expensive sallies into her territory Mrs. Duniway resented almost as much as their alliance with the prohibitionists. For their part, Misses Anthony and Stone seem to have regarded Eliot as a soundingboard for their criticisms of Mrs. Duniway and as a level-headed intermediary between the national program and the work in the Northwest, which to their thinking was far too much a personal extension of Mrs. Duniway.[48]

Eliot's activities in behalf of women's suffrage were chiefly oratorical and personal. The first major political test of the issue in the Northwest came in the fall of 1883 when the legislature of Washington Territory considered granting women the ballot. Eliot, who knew his political way around Olympia, spent some time in the territorial capitol trying to persuade doubtful representatives, including his friend Joe Houghton, to cast affirmative votes. The provision still lacked two votes for passage at his departure, Eliot wrote to his mother, and he hoped that his work had done some good.[49] Whatever Eliot's influence, the legislature passed the amendment on November 15, 1883, and voting rights for women had at least a temporary foothold in the Northwest. William Eliot applauded his son's efforts and underscored their significance. "I am glad to see how heartily you are at work in the women's suffrage cause," he wrote. "It is the great reform and will facilitate all others. In the young states it will tend to educate the people, to purify politics, to elevate social and personal morality, and the _tendency_ is all we should expect."[50]

---

[46] Abigail Scott Duniway to TLE, December 26, 1883; May 26, 1884; and November 10, 1911.

[47] Duniway, Path Breaking, 32-35.

[48] See, for example, Susan B. Anthony to TLE, January 5, 1895 and Lucy Stone to TLE, March 31, 1889.

Eliot himself felt constrained to proclaim the signal significance of the triumph from his pulpit. Cautioning enthusiasts not to expect immediate miracles from the advent of female votes, he was personally delighted at the prospect of their eventual influence: a woman's "swift intuitions, her less sluggish conscience, her greater directness, her faith in ideas . . . on issues that touch the integrity of the home and moral responsibilities of the state" would far outweigh the disadvantages of her political inexperience. The career of Frances Willard, he suggested, stood as a symbol of what the "best women" had been able to accomplish even without the ballot; and with a "living as well as virtual voice in public affairs," their effect upon the "great campaigns" ahead, especially against alcohol, would be inestimable. They would bring to the political arena, he declared, "the voice of the home as well as of the street" and magnify the influence of the small cities and countryside where "the moral force of our nation" was concentrated.[51]

---

[49] TLE to Abigail A. Eliot, October 31, 1883.

[50] William G. Eliot to TLE, November 12, 1883, WGE.

Eliot's hopes for reform through feminism were as short-lived in 1883 as his faith in politicians. A suffrage amendment was soundly defeated in Oregon the following year (Susan B. Anthony attributed the failure to the tactics of Mrs. Duniway's "still hunt"), and in 1887 the legislature of Washington Territory reversed its earlier decision and withdrew the franchise from women.[52] With future prospects in Oregon extremely doubtful, the feminist cause in the Northwest seemed to hang upon the admission of Washington as a state in 1889. It seemed imperative to national leaders, Lucy Stone wrote to Eliot, that Washington enter the Union with equal suffrage for women, but the Eastern leaders were at a loss about how to proceed, especially since they were recipients of such conflicting advice. Mrs. Duniway was advising another "still hunt," while Dr. Thompson of Vancouver was pleading for the Association's best speakers and enough materials "to sow the territory knee deep in literature." With the "very determined opposition to women's suffrage by the members of the Constitutional Convention," chances for success in Washington appeared slim unless Eliot might possibly "drop everything for a few weeks for the sake of the great principle of representative government which is at stake."[53] Five months later Miss Stone renewed her plea, concluding with a flattering assessment of Eliot's stature in the Northwest:

---

[51] TLE, "Women's Political Enfranchisement," Oregonian, November 26, 1883. William Eliot, by now apparently less conservative, lauded this sermon as "the finest on the subject that he had ever seen." Wilbur, Eliot, 64.

---

[52] Susan B. Anthony to TLE, January 5, 1895; Duniway, Path Breaking, 106.

[53] Lucy Stone to TLE, March 31, 1889.

> Now I know of the wide and good influence you have in all that region and the genuine esteem in which you are held. And I am more anxious than I can tell that you should devote a week or more to personal effort with individual members of the convention. It seems to me you would disarm prejudice more than any other person would, and that you could convince them as no other person could of the justice and safety and wisdom of admitting women. They would know you have no personal axe to grind. Hence, they could hear you without prejudice. And you might induce them to reconsider.[54]

There is no evidence that Eliot "dropped everything," as Miss Stone suggested, or that he even considered the possibility. Washington entered statehood with women excluded from the polls, and another avenue of reform appeared to be temporarily blocked. But Eliot lost no time finding a suitable alternative, the Ballot Reform League of Oregon, led by a Portland attorney, Edward W. Bingham.

The alliance of Eliot and Bingham was an understandable though, in some respects, curious development. Both men were independent Republicans, highly-principled and of "unimpeachable integrity," and both wished fervently to see politics in Oregon emancipated from the control of political bosses. Though Bingham was not an active church member, he was "more of a Unitarian than anything else," and his wife, the former Kate Stevens, daughter of the first governor of Washington Territory, was a Unitarian of long standing, a member of the First Unitarian Society and part of a social circle that included Etta Eliot.[55] Bingham himself had achieved a wide reputation in Portland chiefly for two reasons. As an attorney, he had won one of Portland's most highly-publicized suits by proving that the will of Philinda Terwilliger was a forgery.[56] His less widely known reputation--as a chronic alcoholic--was less creditable.[57] Considering that one of the chief ends for which Eliot supported electoral reform was the attainment of prohibition, his close association with Bingham had an ironic aspect. On the other hand, Bingham's frequent lapses from sobriety furnished Eliot with excellent personal reasons to work all the harder.

---

[54] Ibid., August 4, 1889.

---

[55] Oregonian, January 10, 1904. The diaries of Kate Stevens (Bingham) Bates record numerous social events involving Etta Eliot and other women of the First Unitarian Society. Kate Stevens Bates Papers, University of Oregon Library, Oregon.

[56] Oregonian, January 10, 1904.

[57] When Bingham first considered running for the Oregon legislature in 1892, he asked his wife if she thought Oregonians would vote for him. She replied that she thought that the "principal thing they would have against him would be his drinking so much otherwise I believed they would like him. I told him that I considered that he had a great deal more than common ability but he would never amount to much if he continued his habit of drinking. He has first class principals [sic] in every respect. I know of no man whose notions of right and wrong I consider superior to EWB's." Kate Stevens (Bingham) Bates, Diary (1890-1893), 115-116. His brother-in-law, Hazard Stevens, a prominent citizen of Olympia, remonstrated with him about his problem, told him that some friends

Over the course of twelve years (1890-1901), Eliot assisted Bingham in a series of efforts designed to wrest control of electoral machinery and municipal franchises from the Lotan-Simon regular Republican machine. Their record, in addition to attracting reform elements to the Ballot Reform League and the citizens' committee movement, included three conspicuous successes (the "Australian Ballot" Bill of 1891, the "Consolidation" of Portland, East Portland and Albina into a trans-Willamette metropolis, also in 1891, and the Registration Law of 1899) and one failure (the Direct Primary Bill of 1901). The influence of the movement extended well beyond the sphere of Portland municipal politics, however. The electoral reform measures of 1891 and 1899, together with favorable publicity given to the concept of the direct primary in 1901,

---

in Portland "consider you a goner." Hazard Stevens to Edward Bingham, August 19, 1895, Bates Papers. Eliot himself, commenting on "the Bingham matter," wondered "how low a man has slipped who can't brace up for his own home celebration." TLE to HRE, February 24, 1896.

constituted invaluable bases for later components of the "Oregon system," especially the Initiative and Referendum of 1902. Significantly, the direct primary was the first initiative measure to become law in Oregon (1904), the year of Bingham's premature death. By then, however, the direction of political reform in Oregon had passed into other hands.[58]

Eliot's specific role as a progressive political reformer is not easy to define precisely. As secretary of the Ballot Reform League, chief spokesman for its programs and legal architect of its measures, Bingham deservedly received most of the publicity in connection with its activities and later the appellation, "Father of the Australian Ballot." Eliot was nevertheless a valued ally whom Bingham frequently consulted, whose advice he valued and upon whom he placed his chief hopes for placating the hostile

---

[58] There is a great deal of material available on Bingham, the Ballot Reform League, the Australian ballot and registration measures, the "consolidation" and citizens' committee movements in contemporary newspapers as well as in the Bates Papers. The writer has thought it best not to go into the details of these movements themselves but rather to sketch Eliot's relation to them. On the progressive movement in Oregon, see Allen H. Eaton, The Oregon System (Chicago, 1912), esp. 1-6, and Pomeroy, The Pacific Slope, 196-200.

Oregonian.[59] Harvey Scott, a regular Republican with strong party loyalties, initially dismissed Bingham as a "general crank" and branded his reforms "the work of a small class of pseudo-reformers who love indirect and devious ways, whose minds work by labyrinthine methods and who consider chimerical innovation equivalent to reform," and the Australian ballot bill "a law that is a nuisance, a law whose appeal [sic] will certainly be demanded by electors of Oregon after their first trial of its absurd annoyances."[60] Actually, the system worked beautifully at its first test in 1892. It was understandable, however, that before Bingham began his quest for the direct primary law in 1900, and his own election to the House as well, he determined the stance of the controversial but influential journalist. For this he turned to Eliot; "Where will the Oregonian and your other friends stand?" he asked.[61] Bingham believed for good reason that Eliot's name and endorsement carried significant weight in the community.

---

[59] See, especially, Edward W. Bingham to TLE, January 27, 1890 and January 4, 1892.

[60] Oregonian, May 6, 1892.

[61] Bingham to TLE, April 25, 1900. Bingham regarded the direct primary as the "missing link in our election system" and the "last ditch for the 'Machine.'" Ibid., April 4, 1900. He frequently quoted Boss William Tweed in his articles and election materials: "I don't care what registry laws they pass, or what election laws, if they only let the primaries alone." Circular, May 30, 1900, Bates Papers.

Eliot gave more than moral or nominal support to the attorney's campaigns. His Society sponsored lectures on the Australian ballot in 1890 and set up sample voting booths to demonstrate their operation.[62] He was one of the founders of the Ballot Reform League and an effective recruiter of influential allies for the organization. He wrote letters to the Oregonian endorsing Bingham and supporting his measures.[63] And when the crucial days of committee hearings and legislative debate arrived, Eliot stood with Bingham as chaplain for the political troops at Salem. His diary of the period from January 6 to February 17, 1899, reveals the extent of his involvement in the campaign for the registration law:

> January (6) Letter from Bingham ab. Registration; (8) H[enrietta] corrected Bingham's Registration Law for me and I mailed to [Senator] Harmon Salem; (9) L[etter] to HW Scott and Bingham; (11) L to [Senator] Harmon and Bingham; (12) L to Harmon on enclosing Bill; (16) To see Bingham (3 hours); (20) Bingham ab. CES Wood Bill; (23) Writing letter by Hen[rietta] to Legislature; (24) Writing letter to Legislature; (27) Bingham Bill recommitted to Comm.; (28) Bingham's off-1:30; (31) with Bingham-2

---

[62] Wilbur, Eliot, 71-72; Arthur Brown to TLE, January 31, 1890. Eliot also lectured on the subject on occasion. In March 1890, he spoke to the High School. TLE, "Journal" (1890), March 12, 1890.

[63] See especially, Oregonian, February 4, 1899.

hours; February (1) ab. 2-4 at Bingham's off and on; (3) Bingham called. Called on Bingham P.M. wrote to Oregonian; (4) Bingham's office; (6) Bingham; (7) all day tramping with Registration tracts; (8) 8:30 train to Salem seeing Harmon, Josephi, Smith; (9) S B no. 6 Harmon's up on third reading before Senate passed unanimously; (10) Mr. Bingham arrives at 11:30 p m EWB; (11) 7 a.m.-- train for Portland letter to Oregonian called on EWB quite tired out; (13) to Salem. train at 8:30 Talk with . . . and Moody Seat Matt. Greer, former captain of police. talked of backdoor saloons and personnel of leg.; (14) To Chemawa 7 a.m train. Back to Salem at 11, went to Prison and an hour with Gilbert. saw cells, library (Rev. Wilkison) commissary. women's ward. 32 long (no work, never outside, water pumps. Store work. and discussed flogging. in 4 years 1000 men, 22 flogs, runaway trustees--for fighting. a last penalty. 320 inmates. former maxm. 420. reduced by 100. Trusty shyster. Sheriff's (salary) Gilbert favors common mess. Asylum. taken around by Dr. Griffin--saw much improvement. better . . . workshops for inmates and all work done by. Staff 5 physicians. 2 wardens each ward. very neat, nice dining rooms and fine infirmary. 1100 inmates, and school for wardens and feeble minded. very quiet and mournful. Many hours at games. overcrowded. Funny time getting into Stumps. hour for my key. evening Legislature. Moody failed in getting Senate Bill up. very tired. but a good night's rest; (15) House on Daly school bill and peppery. H. passes Pet Bill Res. unless 3/4. Bingham arrives from city. Conf. with Harmon. Dinner with Bingham (spoke to him about stimulants!) P.M. Gen'l Appropriations Bill until 5:30. Gardner arrived. B. and G. Aid and baby home on App. 'B.' after supper things "look dark for us!" Conference with Fulton and Harmon. With B's aid wrote a letter to Hill! Bed at 11:30; (16) pet bill scheme is in and Briggs to call our Bill. saw McKay. Hill. Josephi things look brighter. p.m. Multnomah tax bill. Evening at 9 Harmon Bill Passed poor night again and up at 5:30; (17) to reform school--97 boys. Portland at 4:30 tired out cold and tooth achy but happy.[64]

---

[64] TLE, "Journal" (1899), January 6 - February 17, 1899.

He also reflected his deep involvement in the Harmon Bill in a letter to his wife:

> Affairs assumed a critical stage yesterday evening and looked very much like defeat, but the scene has changed again and prospects are brighter. At this late day, however, everything is a subject of moods and tenses, and if distrust and hoggishness starts in everything may go to pieces and to the winds. So I prepare myself for any event! Mr. Bingham and I work together well and harmoniously with Mr. Harmon whose name is on our Bill. Senate Bill 6. Our bill gets on the calendar of Third Readings today--by a happy turn of affairs. I must stay here as every moment develops a new situation.[65]

Two years later, Eliot also participated, although not as extensively, in Bingham's unsuccessful campaign for a direct primary law. When the bill died in a Senate committee, he wrote Etta: "With the Bingham Bill dead, I feel as if my occupation were gone--but there are 'other fleas' to keep me from boasting on bein' a dog!"[66]

---

[65] TLE to HRE, February 16, 1899. On Senate Bill 6, see Oregon Session Laws (1899), 119-129, for details of this very involved measure.

[66] TLE to HRE, February 16, 1901. On Senate Bill 65 ("Primary Elections"), see Journal of the Senate (1901), 124ff., where the entire text is entered as amended. It passed the Senate, 26-3, but was never read in the House to which it was transmitted on February 15. See Journal of the House (1901), 806. For Eliot's activities, see TLE "Journal" (1901), January 16 to February 15, 1901.

Ballot reform commended itself to Eliot for the same reason that it appealed to the "best men" in the East; it offered a strategic advantage to liberal reformers in their "general quest for honest and limited government."[67] To Eliot, however, electoral reform, civil service reform and political nonpartisanship were more than pragmatic necessities. They were building blocks for the construction of the Kingdom of God on earth and media through which transcendental moral forces worked to elevate society to successively higher ethical planes.[68] Independent political action was a natural ally of religious leaders in their efforts to foster the development of moral communities. As one of Oregon's religious leaders, Eliot was also its pre-eminent Mugwump.[69]

---

[67] L. E. Fredman, The Australian Ballot: The Story of An American Reform (East Lansing, 1968), ix. Fredman attributes the support for ballot reform to the Mugwumps. See, especially, his chapter, "This Spirit of Independency," 99-118.

[68] See especially Eliot's sermons, "An Ethical Estimate of Portland," Oregonian, January 1, 1881; "Between Two Suspicions," Oregonian, October 21, 1884; "A Sermon on the Times," Oregonian, May 14, 1888. This last sermon promoted the concept of local loyalty and its function in endowing individual lives with worth and meaning. It foreshadowed the philosophical elaboration of this idea by Josiah Royce, whose The Philosophy of Loyalty (New York, 1908) was still twenty years in the future. Portland's new mayor commended this particular sermon because it signified that Christianity had become "so broad and comprehensive as to treat temporal matters vital to the community." Van B. de Lashmutt to TLE, May 14, 1888.

Eliot's quarter century of reform activities had little evident effect upon the moral tone of Portland. The city at the turn of the century, according to Rabbi Stephen Wise, was under the control of gambling and liquor interests which, "in collusion with city officials and above all with the police department, poisoned and corroded the life of the city." The populace, meanwhile, had become acquiescent and cynical and seemed to take it for granted that "organized vice was entitled to no small part in managing the city and its affairs."[70] Eliot was one of many who protested vigorously to Mayor George Williams against his tolerance of corruption, but to no avail.[71] Only with the close victory of Dr.

---

[69] Eliot fits, in many respects, the description of the typical Mugwump ("men of breeding and intelligence, of taste and substance") that John G. Sproat sketches in The Best Men: Liberal Reformers in the Gilded Age (New York, 1968), 4-10.

[70] Wise, Challenging Years, 7-8. Wise himself was a liberal reformer with Mugwump tendencies. "The moment a minister accepts public office at the hands of a political party," he asserted, "relations are established between him and a party that must inevitably affect his independence."

[71] On George Williams, see Sidney Teiser, "Life of George H. Williams: Almost Chief Justice," Oregon Historical Quarterly, XLVII (December 1946), 417-440. Teiser caricatured Williams as "a miniature Grant." Eliot remonstrated at Williams' policies and the "lowering of standards" they implied. TLE, draft to Mayor George H. Williams, August 27, 1903. Williams at this time was also president of the Boys and Girls Aid Society, and Eliot knew him well.

Harry Lane in the mayoralty race of 1904 did it appear that reformers, good government men and civic righteousness might prevail in Portland.

CHAPTER X

A MAN IN MOTION

> I think my Eastern trip has furnished a medicine to my disease, if disease it may be called. I hope . . . it has not given food to pride, but only confirmed me in my self-reliance and self-respect.
>
> Thomas Lamb Eliot to Henrietta Eliot,
> October 31, 1874

One warm evening in August 1898, Henrietta Eliot wrote her husband a letter on a topic forbidden in conversation--his anxieties. "Dear Tom," she began,

> you must not add to your burdens that of "worrying that you worry"--and you must not call your depression "moroseness." Your effort to be cheerful and gentle is pathetic (when one knows as I do, how you fight for it, and successful--I mean they wouldn't suspect but what you were happy--to those who don't know). That you do suffer so, mentally, is due in great part, I am sure, to your physical condition; for although there is enough in the world about us to make us all sad, and enough in your own personal suffering and limitation to make you additionally so--all put together would not succeed against the elasticity of a "well-slept," well nourished physique. . . . You say you have too many "mental stomachaches" for an old Christian--Christianity can help us bear trouble, and act cheerful when our hearts are breaking . . . but plenty of sleep and good digestion give Christianity a much easier job! There! I'm "talking about it" and you'd stop me if you were here! But once and for all, it isn't so much how you act that grieves me, for,

> as I said, you are wonderfully patient and cheerful, but it's how you feel that breaks my heart and keeps me longing incessantly to help what I can't help![1]

Over the years, Eliot learned to live with both his "mental stomachaches" and his physical disabilities. He found solace in prayer and meditation, in the quiet beauty of his retreat at Hood River, and in fishing, riding and mountain climbing. More efficacious than any of these was the therapeutic value of travel.

In spite of his many commitments and the frailty of his constitution, he logged an amazing number of miles on every sort of conveyance, all of them slow. Whatever the ostensible purpose of a trip, he always benefited personally. Whether traveling to St. Louis, Boston, Rome or Tokyo, he found along the way renewal and reconsecration for tasks at home.

Some of Eliot's domestic pilgrimages to St. Louis and New England directly affected his work in Oregon. Several of his visits to Unitarian headquarters, for example, brought commitments of men and money for work in the Northwest, and a convincing presentation on another occasion led to a resolve to locate a seminary at Berkeley. His inspection of Eastern classrooms and discussions with prominent educators in 1874 were immediately discernible in both his philosophy of education and his policies as superintendent of schools. A visit to Connecticut in 1882 helped change his views about reform schools, and his observations of elections in Massachusetts seven years later convinced him of the necessity of electoral reform in Oregon.

---

[1] HRE to TLE, August 7, 1898.

Beyond any immediate gain that Eliot was able to transmit to Oregon, however, there were the considerable fringe benefits of travel itself. He enjoyed the experience and looked forward to the results he expected from it. As he was about to entrain for the East in 1874, he wrote Etta from San Francisco: "I think home and East will make me a new man for being and doing."[2] The prospects of seeing St. Louis and New England acted as a powerful magnet, and his pilgrimage ad fontes inevitably sparked rededication to his heritage, his church, his class and his mission. Although it was an arduous journey, even after Portland had direct rail connections with the East, Eliot made the trip a dozen times during his parish years (1867-1892) and more frequently thereafter.

The traveler seemed to be almost a different Eliot, relieved for a season of the pressures of his office and shorn, to a great extent, of many of his anxieties. He appeared to be a much more casual, relaxed, tolerant man with a curious interest in the smallest details of human behavior and a marvelous sense of humor. Having given Etta a brief description of the scenery east of Laramie in the fall of 1874, Eliot turned his pen on himself and his fellow-travelers:

---

[2] TLE to HRE, September 7, 1874.

> I have in my bag just what I want--a few crackers, a white vest for warm afternoons, my slippers . . . which serve me now a better turn than ever before (tight shoes), a little cologne and brandy (for slight indigestions), my glasses which I wear constantly, spite of the pretty faces in the car. I read very little and ignore the fine print of Bleak House almost entirely. The sleeping car is very comfortable, but $4 a night and meals $1 apiece. I make a good breakfast and do without except lunchwise, balance of time. Opposite me sit a couple (O how obviously just married!) whom I mentally call Beauty and the Beast. She, like a hyacinth, in her fresh linen suit, a really lovely face, form, large hazel eyes and piquante. He big, hairy as a pard. and most evidently a mining man or Railroad ditto, who has "struck it." He has a store hat and boots and has a gold stud for a necktie to his broad paper collar which looks against his brawny red neck like a swan in a brick yard. They bill and coo and she evidently thinks the world of him--I guess he's a good fellow. However, I have to see it all, and--I wish his nose were straighter, or she were homelier--for the sake of the eternal fitnesses . . . . Now they have got together behind a newspaper which they are reading to each other--very much married aren't they. Last night Sambo asked him whether he should make up two beds or only the lower one? Both, said he nonchalant. When they "retired" he said "good night" and crawled like a great lobster into the upper berth. She pulled his toes behind the curtain as his legs hung over--then

> after a little still time, I saw her reach up (behind the curtain of course) and pull his big head over for a kiss.[3]

Capsule commentaries on each of his other car-mates followed in turn.

Eliot soon found that the more serious aspects of his trip more than justified his expectations. New England was, as always, a tonic to his soul. "I love Boston," he wrote after ten days in New England, adding that his visit there had done him a "world of good."[4] He had had fine conversations with Dorothea Dix and "a grand temperance time" at the National Conference where there were also brilliant essays and discussions, "diamonds cutting diamonds."[5] Most importantly, his own speech to a missionary meeting had won an enthusiastic reception. "I was met so heartily in my speech, and seemed to have hit all my nails square," he wrote Etta, that he was "satisfied or very nearly so myself."[6]

---

[3] Ibid., September 11, 1874.

[4] Ibid., September 28, 1874.

[5] Ibid., September 17, 1874.

[6] Ibid., September 27, 1874.

Dorothea Dix confirmed Eliot's own sense of triumph. Tom, she wrote, "has made an excellent impression both in Massachusetts and Saratoga, and . . . he will be remembered with great interest, affection and respect."[7] It was a new , resilient Eliot who summarized his impressions just before leaving New England: "I have never done a better nor more useful thing all around than this coming East 'so far.'"[8] Among the most helpful of conclusions he had reached touching his own ministry was the conviction that his "dear church in Portland" compared favorably with other Unitarian churches.[9]

Other notable journeys to New England followed, each strengthening Eliot's self-confidence and sense of purpose. After attending a Unitarian conference at Saratoga in 1870, he came home "refreshed in body and spirit--almost longing for work."[10] In 1876 he stopped off in Boston before boarding a steamer for Europe and accepted an impromptu invitation to address a festival meeting of the American Unitarian Association. Once again he had detected among his colleagues the attitude that missionary service in Oregon involved great sacrifices on his part, and in his brief, extemporaneous remarks, he attempted to counter that impression:

---

[7] D. L. Dix to HRE, October 1874.

[8] TLE to HRE, n.d., 1874.

[9] *Ibid.*, October 4, 1874.

[10] *Ibid.*, October 18, 1870.

> I thank you for the kindness you show me, but I am not so presumptuous as to think it means me; it means the work in which I have been trying to engage--the cause we are trying to uphold in that distant land of Oregon and Washington Territory. You talk about self-sacrifice. I do not understand what it means, when it is choosing to work in a land where I can look at three of the grandest snow mountains in the world; where on the streets I know everybody, even if they come from miles away; and where I have to aid me in my work one of the most loving people on the face of the earth. There is no self-sacrifice in that, and I feel ashamed to be thought to be preaching it, though there are men about me who are self-sacrificing. I do feel most deeply the importance of our work. We are needed in the world. We need to be filled with the kind of earnestness that is felt on such occasions as this, to enable us to spring up and flow out into fullness of life. Just across the river from my house there bursts a spring, and its characteristic is that when everything else is parching, then that spring flows fullest and coldest. And why is it? Because its source is upon that mountain where its snows are being distilled beneath the summer sun at just the time when the "blameless cattle" and thirsty man most need it. Oh, if our great cause could thus imitate the divine method, the divine plan, there would be no talk about self-sacrifice. As Schiller once said, "You talk about virtue; I would the world were so full of it that none ever mentioned it."[11]

At the conclusion of Eliot's remarks, Judge Samuel Hoar rose and said in response, "I am unwilling to mar the music of that utterance with anything further to-night. Let us join in singing the doxology." In St. Louis, William Greenleaf Eliot, clipping the text of his son's speech from the latest issue of the Christian Register, confided to his notebook that it was "most certainly a good and Christian speech--and good to be remembered by."[12] Eliot himself was elated at the accolades. "I am just home from the Festival," he wrote to Etta,

---

[11] Christian Register, June 10, 1876.

> --a fine affair. I was called on as last speaker and seemed to give satisfaction. In short, I speak it in your dear ear, they said I made the best of the evening. This was not so but I said only a little, and perhaps more to the point than some others, and that always tells . . . . At 2 p.m. at the Free Religious Services, was introduced to Emerson, Garrison, Phillips, Miss Alcott and others. Big Indian me![13]

Opportunities for stimulating social intercourse were as much a part of New England's magnetism as the prestige of its rostrums, and Eliot was not one to hang back when invitations beckoned from Brahmin doors. Numerous social galas filled Eliot's life during the two months that he sojourned in New England in the fall of 1882: tea with Edward Everett Hale, conversations with James Freeman

---

[12] William G. Eliot, Notebook 9, July 11, 1876, WGE.

[13] TLE to HRE, June 1, 1876.

Clarke and the theater with William Lloyd Garrison Jr. As he departed for New York in mid-December, Eliot voiced his pleasure with the results of his stay: "So goodbye to dear New England--I have seen and gained much and am getting fat."[14]

In 1889 he proudly returned to visit his son, then following the Eliot footsteps at Harvard, and to receive from his *alma mater* the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity. "I would amuse you to see how much is made of Dr. Eliot here and in Boston," he wrote to Etta.[15] On each of his returns to New England, there was a deep sense of homecoming and profound expressions of respect for all that the region meant to him. Like his father before him, Eliot was eager to bear westward what he understood to be the burden of New England's blessings to America--a liberal faith, civilizing institutions and culture of the highest type.

Eliot's *Wanderjahr* in Europe (June 1876-March 1877) was a response to the same complex pattern of physical and emotional needs that prompted his domestic pilgrimages. He had complained of an increasingly sore throat for over a year, and early in 1876 he wrote to James Freeman Clarke that the distress would possibly "drive him to Eastern pastures for rest, perhaps Europe . . . . I have worked hard for ten years," he added, "and need a Sunday year."[16] Emotionally, the pressures of his first decade in Portland had created a need for detached reassessment of all that he was doing. Moreover, his father had taken the same kind of sabbatical year in Europe at approximately the same juncture in his own ministry, creating ample precedent if such were needed. With William Eliot's decision to pay expenses also for Tom's younger brother, Christopher, just completing college and "inclined toward the ministry," little stood in the way of his grand tour. Leaving his wife and children behind in St. Louis was the only distasteful part of the plan.[17]

---

[14] *Ibid.*, December 14, 1882.

[15] *Ibid.*, November 9, 1889. On his return home from Cambridge, Eliot stopped off at St. Louis to baptize Thomas Stearns and Frank Munroe Eliot. TLE, "Journal" (1889), November 17, 1889.

The brothers commenced their odyssey on June 20, 1876, on board the steamer Wisconsin. The date was of particular significance to Eliot because it was the day he had embarked for California in 1860.[18] There were similarities other than the coincidence of dates. In each instance he sought recovery of health, indications of his future and a better knowledge of himself. On the way to Europe, however, he had the cheering company of a helpful brother and the pleasing prospects of a continent of culture ahead; and there were few dark thoughts to cloud his soul. The crossing was pleasant, and twelve days after departure, the Wisconsin docked at Liverpool, a "cross between Boston and Pittsburg."[19]

---

[16] TLE to James Freeman Clarke, n. d., 1876. He added, "I have been reading Goethe of late, with care, an old story, he, with you, while I was a baby. But what a man to go with in order to get rid of over anxiety and friction."

[17] William G. Eliot, Notebook 9, May 6, 1876, WGE. William Eliot argued with himself: "Can I have Chr. go with his Brother Thomas to Europe. No--poverty forbids. Yes. --it is good for both of them and of life-time benefit. Common sense says, prudence. A higher sense says, 'carpe diem,'--loss of money is the least evil. . . . I can do it, tho with hard squeezing." Ibid., May 10, 1876.

The travelers were free to take as much time as they wished and allot it as they chose. William Eliot advised them neither to rush nor to count the cost. "Get what Europe can give you before leaving it," he counseled.[20] As it developed, they spent July in England and divided August between Scotland and the Low Countries.

---

[18] TLE to HRE, June 11, 1876. On June 17, Eliot had called on General William T. Sherman to obtain a letter of introduction. TLE to HRE, June 17, 1876. The letter, addressed "to my friends abroad," referred to Eliot as "the son of his very special friend and most ardent patriot and man of learning in America." William T. Sherman "to my friends abroad," June 17, 1876.

[19] TLE to HRE, July 1, 1876.

[20] William G. Eliot to "Boys," January 15, 1877, WGE.

During September they tramped through Germany and Switzerland, climbed mountains, sailed rivers and wrote lengthy descriptions of the scenery. By October they were in Italy, where, after seeing the sights in Milan and Venice, they found a "good Italian hotel, central, quiet and cheap," and settled in at Rome for four months of rest and leisurely sight-seeing.[21] In mid-February they sailed to Athens, where they remained nearly two weeks. By the time they reached Paris early in March, Eliot had had enough and was ready to return to America. "Galleries and 'furren' doings, Gothic churches and scenery are fast beginning to pall on the taste," he informed his father. "A turn in the Louvre and a visit to the Saint's Chapelle this morning proves it!"[22] After several weeks in London, given over largely to medical consultations (his throat had not improved at all) and a valued visit with James Martineau, the patriarch of English Unitarians, the Eliots sailed for the States at the end of March.

---

[21] TLE to HRE, October 19, 1876. Eliot wrote voluminously on this journey. In addition to many letters to his wife, children, father and mother, he kept a meticulous diary of everything seen and done. He illustrated the diary with clever pencil sketches that are a story in themselves.

[22] TLE to William G. Eliot, March 6, 1877.

The most valued part of the tour for Eliot had been neither the scenery nor the expertise of European medical men but the religious and cultural shrines of the Continent. At Geneva, he was indignant at the city's indifference to its religious heritage:

> Visited place where Servetus was burned. This has no monument, name nor sign to tell its story. A most unworthy omission. There should be on such a spot an imposing memorial, e.g. a statue of the Spirit of Toleration, putting her foot on a flaming torch and instruments of persecution. Calvin's house too, when you have found it, is occupied by sisters of charity, and no admission. Geneva believes today in watches and promenades and forgets her history.[23]

At Rome, the seat of the church whose teachings and rites were most antithetical to his own, he came prepared to scoff, but apart from a few irreverent comments ("Christy and I are wishing as long as Pius IX is mortal that he will 'do it' while we are here so that we may see 'the doings'"),[24] he was unable to laugh at religious practices or disparage so venerable an institution. "The Catholic," he wrote to Etta, "will cling to his faith while he despises priest and pope, so rich is it in history and sentiment, and a certain mother love and indulgence to him."[25]

---

[23] TLE to HRE, September 28, 1876.

[24] Ibid., November 21, 1876.

[25] Ibid., December 10, 1876.

Eliot's severest strictures in Rome, surprisingly, were reserved for the Scotch Presbyterian divine whose services he and Chris endured for several Sundays before the American Union Chapel opened in mid-December. Although Eliot lampooned the first offering by the Presbyterian, a tedious sermon that ended in a one sentence "arplycaa-shunn, D--n the Pope,"[26] he and Chris returned the following Sunday. The minister's second presentation was, Eliot reported, an even "more distasteful offering, a horrible sermon on 'the Blood.' The worst of it," Eliot concluded, "was his evident sincerity. All morality, all penitence were nothing without it." To fill their religious needs that morning, the Eliots "stopped and worshiped a few moments in the Pantheon" before "quietly rumbling over the Palatine hill and palaces of Caesar."[27]

Eliot's most satisfying religious experience occurred in the catacombs, where he found in the inscriptions of the primitive church confirmation of his belief in the nontheological character of early Christianity. He exulted at the "entire absence of scholastic ideas of atonement" and evidences of a "simple, untutored faith in salvation by the Son of God, and entire assurance of a glorious afterlife."[28] He was deeply moved by a fragment from a Roman soldier's barracks, whereon was caricatured a crucified Christ with an ass's head. "Such was the impression that the religion of suffering love made on a Roman soldier's mind," he mused.[29] Standing amid the ruins of imperial Rome, Eliot was torn between two conflicting emotions. One was a transcendental experience of the church: "I think Rome has made me feel this spiritual world, for history so crowds names and events upon every spot . . . that it is natural to feel that some of the vast throng are lingering about."[30] The other was a gloomy premonition of his own nation's future, "that we of America will have our day, our sin and fall."[31] The future aside, he was living for the present, he wrote his congregation, "in a mine of gold."[32]

---

[26] Ibid., November 26, 1876.

[27] TLE to William G. Eliot, December 10, 1876.

---

[28] Ibid., January 21, 1877.

[29] Ibid., December 10, 1876.

[30] Ibid., December 16, 1876.

[31] Ibid., n.d.

[32] TLE to First Unitarian Society, Portland, Oregon, December 15, 1876, FUS.

Even greater treasures awaited Eliot in Athens. The cultural emporium of the ancient world had not been on the brothers' original itinerary, and Eliot argued with himself during his Roman holiday whether Athens was worth the extra $75 it would take to get them there.[33] His long-standing love for the Greek language and literature (he was hardly ever without one of the Homeric epics on his travels) virtually determined the outcome of the debate, and on February 4 he decided to "invest in an experience of life-long value."[34] Some of his initial reactions were negative. Accustomed to the beauty of classical Greek rolling along in Homeric cadences, he was horrified at the modern spoken version, which to him sounded "like a cross between a cat spitting and a turkey gobbling." High hopes that he might view the cache of Greek treasures recently unearthed by Heinrich Schliemann also seemed unlikely to be realized. The collection, he discovered, was "zealously locked away in a bank while Schliemann himself was dictating his book behind barred and bell-less doors." Not about to give up without trying, Eliot called at Schliemann's house to check the rumor that there was to be an exhibition for photographers, and was told to call again later.[35] Two days later he and Chris enjoyed the rewards of persistence:

---

[33] TLE to HRE, January 12, 1877.

[34] Ibid., February 4, 1877.

> Yesterday afternoon we had most fortunately the longed-for sight of the recently discovered Argive treasures of Dr. Schliemann; it was the *first* exhibition that has been made, and that privately, for the benefit of the officers of the English fleet now lying in the harbor. We were invited by Dr. Schliemann himself to be present and were, I think, the only Americans there except Mr. Reed the minister.

Among the objects that particularly fascinated Eliot were two remarkable swords, thought to have once belonged to Agamemnon. "Christy and I ought to be well lionized for sight of these things alone, when we come home," he exulted.[36]

The months abroad were salubrious for Eliot even though he did not find healing for his throat. The relaxation of travel and leisurely pace of life, the hours in the art galleries and days on the Alpine trails were more of a tonic than all the medications he carried. There were times when he brooded over the failure of his throat to improve--"It is a great trial, dear mother!" he wrote from Rome,--[37] but he subordinated his fears to the faith that he would not be cut off so early from his chosen work in life. It was generally a time of excitement, discovery and well-being. For a diversion on brother Hal's birthday the advocates of temperance purchased a flask of wine and "drank his health and confusion to his enemies" in the shadow of the Vatican.[38] As to Eliot's throat, the best specialists of London and Paris were unable to cure it, and he would have returned to Portland unimproved but for a quirk of fate. Standing on a dock in San Francisco, waiting to embark upon a steamer for Portland, he fell into chance conversation with a Universalist minister who had been plagued with the same malady years before. The Universalist recommended a style of deep breathing that soon relieved the irritation.[39] The healing that Eliot had sought from the spas of Baden Baden to the fountains of Rome had appeared mysteriously at his own doorstep.

---

[35] *Ibid.*, February 17, 1877.

[36] *Ibid.*, February 20, 1877.

Although Eliot's visit to Japan in 1903 was of a very different character from his trip to Europe, the effects upon the traveler were similar. He went at the request of his denomination rather than out of his own need, and he worked at a breakneck pace. Yet he felt renewed and refreshed by the experience, as he suggested in a letter to his wife midway through his assignment:

---

[37] TLE to Abigail A. Eliot, n.d.

[38] TLE to HRE, November 26, 1876.

[39] Wilbur, Eliot, 51.

> Well--had a fine night after a fatiguing day--I sometimes wonder at my old and new self and what they are standing! Getting to love the Japanese--so responsive to real friends and to cordial appreciation of their own lives and ways. I think they are getting fond of me too![40]

Moreover, the necessity of evaluating the quality of Japanese Unitarianism led Eliot to reappraise his own positions at the beginning of a new century.

"Here comes a problem," Eliot wrote to Etta after opening his mail one morning in November 1902.[41] The problem was an invitation from Samuel Eliot, president of the American Unitarian Association, to visit Japan as commissioner of the Association. It had been two years since an American Unitarian had observed the Japanese mission, and President Eliot admitted he would feel "safer" if someone from the States would check on their progress as well as on their stewardship of the Association's subsidy.[42] Eliot's immediate inclination was to accept, but for ten days he balanced his reluctance to put 3,000[sic] miles between himself and his family against his love for travel and the needs of the Association. "I know I should resist my inclination to 'retire,'" he wrote to Etta, "and perhaps a little expansion will help me to cleanse my bosom of some perilous stuff."[43] On December 1, he notified Samuel Eliot that he would undertake the Japanese mission "to the best of my ability."[44]

---

[40] TLE to HRE, April 23, 1903.

[41] *Ibid*., November 18, 1902.

[42] Samuel A. Eliot to TLE, November 12, 1902.

Eliot knew little about Japan, but he quickly gathered all the books and articles he could obtain. Materials on the Unitarian mission were difficult to come by, however, and even President Eliot regretted that there was little in print on the endeavor. It had begun in the mid-1880s with the request from some Japanese Unitarians to the Association for a representative to work with them "on the basis of fellowship with their existing religious institutions, rather than of distinct denominational propaganda." Arthur N. Knapp (1887-1890) and Clay McCauley (1891-1901) had served successively as the principal American representatives and ministers for the Japanese Unitarian Association. With McCauley's retirement in 1901, the American Association thought it best to entrust the work entirely to the Japanese, while it continued to supply counsel and funds. It was to see what had happened in the interval since McCauley's departure that Eliot was to visit Japan.[45]

---

[43] TLE to HRE, November 18, 1902 and December 1, 1902.

[44] TLE to Samuel Eliot, December 1, 1902.

President Eliot outlined for his namesake the particular issues his mission was to explore. He was first of all to encourage and advise the Japanese, who, though "discreet, industrious and earnest," needed American influence to "hold them from running into vagaries, to check their wanderings, to stimulate their activity, to concentrate their energies." More specifically, he should evaluate plans of the Japanese to open a new center in the vicinity of the Imperial University, check the possibilities of establishing "out stations" for groups of "sympathetic friends" in the larger cities of Japan, promote the idea of self-support for the Tokyo congregation, investigate the "tone and tendency" of Unitarian publications, and appraise the relations between Unitarians and other Christian workers in Japan. The last was of considerable importance to President Eliot:

---

[45] TLE, "The Japanese Unitarian Mission," Pacific Unitarian, XI (June 1903), 306.

> We apparently stand very far apart from all the other missionary societies. I am not inclined to think that we ought to be in close relations, but we need more information on that subject. Our mission is all the time being misjudged and abused even by our own people because it is judged in the terms of ordinary foreign missions. The fact is that our whole purpose and method is utterly different, and our success cannot be summed up in numbers of converts made and churches founded. My impression is that we have a decided mission not only to the intelligent Buddhists, but also to the Orthodox Christians, and that in fact perhaps our best work can be done among the Japanese who have already accepted Christianity. Here is a new field of service and I want to have the possibilities investigated.[46]

Eliot was awed by the magnitude of the assignment, but he assured his cousin that he would attempt to be a good observer and convey to the Association his impressions of "tendencies to be encouraged or discouraged." He hoped also that he would have several weeks left free for travel.[47]

With his mandate in his pocket and his faithful traveling companion, Homer's Odyssey, in his trunk, Eliot boarded the steamer Siberia at San Francisco on March 11, 1903, for its maiden voyage to the Orient. His fellow passengers included the superintendent of missions for the American Board in China, six other ministers and a sprinkling of Unitarians, including General W. W. Blackmer of Boston, a member of the board of the Unitarian Building-Loan Fund, and Ernest Longfellow, son of the poet. It was "a distinguished passenger list," one Japanese newspaper announced, identifying Eliot as a minister "known and honored by the entire population of the Pacific Coast." After a pleasant layover of several days at Honolulu, the Siberia arrived at Yokohama on March 28. The crossing had been so enjoyable that a committee of passengers, including Eliot, passed a resolution of tribute to the captain.[48]

---

[46] Samuel Eliot to TLE, December 2 and December 30, 1902.

[47] TLE to Samuel Eliot, December 9, 1902.

The affairs of the mission confronted Eliot sooner than he expected, as he was met at Yokohama by Arthur Knapp, one of the founders of the mission. The meeting was a surprise to Eliot, since no one had told him that Knapp, editor of a secular paper, was still living in Japan. Knapp had a great deal to say about the mission, however, and Eliot's conversations with him lasted all the way to Tokyo. Knapp was generally critical of missionaries in Japan, who tended to be nonintellectuals and "slaves to reports," and who reported sacrifices to their boards while living lives of ease. He was particularly critical of Clay McCauley, his successor, who had neglected the upper classes and intelligentsia in his "anxiety to enroll numbers." Eliot should understand, Knapp warned, that in Japan, where everything was done from above, the Unitarians should concentrate their efforts on the higher classes. It would be slow in the beginning, but in the end "the surer and ultimately more rapid." Eliot regarded Knapp as "bright and personable" but overly cynical in his attitudes and provincial in his style of life. Eliot hoped that he had brought the editor some optimism.[49]

---

[48] TLE to HRE, March 11, 14, 15, 16, 17, 20 and 26, 1903; clipping, "A Notable Passenger List"; clipping, "A Tribute to Captain Smith," The Japan Daily Advertiser, n. d.

Eliot's assignment was to talk with the Japanese, not about them, and the day after his arrival in Tokyo he commenced serious discussions with Jitsunen Saji and Saichiro Kanda, the two leading figures of the Japanese Unitarian Association. They met at Unity Hall, headquarters of the Association, a building that impressed

---

[49] TLE, Notebooks of his voyage to Japan, 1903 (hereinafter, Notebooks), April 1, 1903; TLE to Samuel Eliot, April 3, 1903.

Eliot greatly. In addition to an auditorium capable of accommodating 250 persons, it housed a library, a reading room, classrooms and offices. On either side of the pulpit in the main hall hung portraits of Unitarian divines, Channing to the right and Parker to the left.[50]

In this setting, over a period of three weeks, Eliot sought answers to the questions that President Eliot had asked through extended discussions with the Japanese leaders. Among the first judgments that Eliot made were assessments of Saji and Kanda. Saji, Eliot reported, was a "figure of some station in the world" and had a keen interest in municipal reform work. He appeared to be "a kind of Theodore Parker, perhaps." Kanda seemed to be "intelligent, earnest and very practical" and had thoroughly assimilated the ideas and methods of liberal theology, "not only as a history, but in present aspects and relations to men and things." Except for the difficulties of communicating through an interpreter, a fact that made it hard "to come to common terms," Eliot found his interviews heartening. His first impressions of Japanese Unitarianism were extremely favorable, and Eliot was soon able to arrive at firm answers to substantive questions.[51]

---

[50] TLE, Notebook, March 31, 1903.

[51] *Ibid.*; TLE to Samuel Eliot, April 3, 1903.

On the matter of expanding into the University district of Tokyo, both Eliot and his hosts quickly agreed that Unitarianism ought to focus its efforts on the academic community and initiate a program in that direction as soon as possible. If the Japanese would raise the cost of the site, Eliot suggested, the Americans would underwrite at least part of the cost of a modest building. Eliot stressed the modesty of the building, as he had been instructed, because the Japanese were projecting a veritable cathedral seating more than a thousand persons. Neither Saji nor Kanda would consider the idea of a loan, as Eliot proudly reported, because they were too conservative to incur a debt they might not be able to amortize.[52]

Closely related to the issue of expansion was the question of self-support, and Eliot soon discovered that the Japanese were far from realizing the ideal. "They are not far along in the education of the people as givers or makers of sacrifices," Eliot reported. Since the majority of active Unitarians were students, their contributions were meager, averageing ten cents a month, hardly enough to finance expansion beyond Tokyo. From his visit to Osaka, where Eliot had observed a struggling Universalist mission, he concluded that the cost of outstations would be prohibitively high unless borne entirely by the Americans.[53]

---

[52] TLE, Notebook, April 19, 1903; TLE to Samuel Eliot, April 3, 1903.

It was more difficult for Eliot to get to the core of the ideological questions, especially the theological stance of the Japanese Unitarians. He noticed a decidedly social emphasis in the first Japanese sermons he heard, and he asked the ministers about the content of their preaching. Saji admitted that he formerly preached on doctrinal questions but switched to more practical issues because they drew larger audiences. Of Kanda, Eliot asked, "Can you preach Jesus?" The Japanese explained that he could--as "brother man and example"--and that he truly desired to make his work "thoroughly a work of religion and to preach allegiance to Jesus and Unitarians the true believers in Jesus." Throughout his stay in Tokyo, Eliot continued to urge Saji and Kanda to "keep religious" and vindicate the Unitarians' name as "the true representatives of Christianity and Jesus himself." To President Eliot he reported that he was trying to "secure at least a fair amount of religious and Unitarian teaching."[54]

---

[53] TLE to Samuel Eliot, April 3 and May 14, 1903.

The tendency toward socialism among Japanese Unitarians troubled Eliot even more than the drift toward secularism. From a number of sources, he had heard of pronounced socialistic leanings among the Unitarian leaders. The issue was not on his agenda, but Eliot decided he had to deal with it: "Must probe the sleeping dog, I fear." He ultimately invested more time in this probe than in any other, partly because the definition of "socialism" was more elusive in Japanese than it was in English. While Eliot ascertained that there was a wide variety of socialist views among the Unitarian leaders, he also concluded--to his great relief--that the socialism in question was academic rather than revolutionary and pointed toward the attainment of social justice. Kanda, for example, self-described as the mildest of the socialists, advocated a "peaceful, progressive and religiously impulsed improvement of social conditions." From Arthur Knapp and others he heard that Richard T. Ely was the most widely-read theorist among Japanese intellectuals of the "critical school" and "exercises a great influence."[55]

---

[54] TLE, Notebooks, April 8, 14, 15 and 16, 1903; TLE to Samuel Eliot, April 20, 1903.

[55] TLE, Notebooks, April 12, 14 and 22; TLE to Samuel Eliot, April 15 and 16, 1903.

The question of socialism also dominated Eliot's discussion with the staff of the Unitarian periodical, Rikuyu Gasshi. The editor and his entire staff, Eliot soon discovered, were all socialists, and their articles concentrated on such topics as municipal ownership of utilities, shorter working hours, better schools and, above all, "higher morals of public men." It was Christian socialism that he was promoting, the editor assured Eliot, and all his articles were "imbued with religious feeling and . . . in the interest of spiritual betterment." If his liberal leanings embarrassed the Unitarian cause in Japan, the editor volunteered, he would gladly resign. Eliot, in reply, assured him of his great confidence but advised "that in the interest of Unitarian propaganda" the editor might give "some considerable attention to direct religious intelligence, communication and statement of [Unitarian] principles."[56]

In the relation between Unitarians and other religious groups in Japan, Eliot found reason for both pessimism and hope. The negative aspect was the familiar story of hostility from evangelical churches. Saji told Eliot that he thought relations had considerably improved, but Kanda indicated it was necessary to distinguish between

---

[56] TLE to Samuel Eliot, April 23, 1903.

American missionaries and their Japanese colleagues. The Occidentals had "practically disfellowshiped" the Unitarians, Kanda asserted, while the Orientals were considerably more "tolerant and sympathetic" toward them.[57]

In both private conversation and public statements, Eliot attempted to play down the issue of orthodox opposition. He urged the Unitarians to be patient with the evangelicals. "We should seek for good in each other," he suggested in one of his sermons, "respect all denominations and try to see the truth in all . . . . If one church and movement is farther up and sees more, it will be patient with other's mistakes. So in Unitarianism, a want and hope that when they climb further they will see as we do." Eliot privately reported to President Eliot that Unitarians in Japan could "not be close to other missions," but that the "Japanese workers, and the doubters among orthodox converts will be brought into frequent contact with our men and I am inclined to think a strong current may set up from them toward our principles and statements of religious truth."[58]

---

[57] TLE, Notebooks, April 8 and 14, 1903.

[58] TLE, Notebooks, April 5, 1903; TLE to Samuel Eliot, April 9 and May 14, 1903.

Of good relations with the native religions of Japan, particularly Buddhism, Eliot was more hopeful. Only twenty years before, he had learned, Buddhists and Christians quarreled constantly, and the public press completely ignored religion. Recently, however, there had been a decided improvement on both fronts, with New Buddhists and Unitarians in the vanguard of ecumenism and a significant coverage of religious affairs by the popular press. There were also some hopeful signs of a religious renaissance among Japan's wealthy and intellectual classes, and a number of Eliot's interviewees seemed to believe that Unitarianism was especially well situated to take advantage of the improving religious climate.[59]

Eliot utilized two Sundays of his stay in Tokyo to address large audiences at Unity Hall. On April 5, "a great day" for Eliot, the auditorium was crowded to capacity and there was a large number of people standing. After the singing of the national hymn, Kanda read the scripture (John XVIII), and Saji spoke a prayer. Eliot then spoke for forty minutes through an interpreter, emphasizing the fundamental principles of "liberty and reason" that enabled Unitarianism to wield influence far exceeding the size of its contituency.

---

[59] TLE, Notebooks, April 8, 1903; TLE to Samuel Eliot, April 15 and 16, 1903.

The editor of the Unitarian magazine followed Eliot to the rostrum and spoke for an additional fifty minutes. After the service and a dinner, there were photographs and four extemporaneous speeches that Eliot regarded as "remarkable for intellectual and spiritual insight."[60]

On Easter Sunday, April 12, Eliot was again on the platform, but he did not speak. Saji delivered one of the major addresses--two were customary, one by a layman--and Mr. Shimada, a member of the Diet from Yokohama, the other. On April 19, Eliot again spoke in a service that was nearly endless. Saji followed Eliot's thirty-minute address with a forty-minute speech of his own, and he in turn was followed by a New Buddhist who spoke for over an hour and a half on "Immortality." "I thought we were all on the way there," Eliot reported to Etta, "and so did the audience, for Mr. Saji finally had to tell him he was so sorry etc. but time was up. (I think we all wanted W.C.!)." On Sunday, April 26, Eliot addressed the Universalist congregation at Osaka.[61]

---

[60] TLE, Notebooks, April 5, 1903; TLE to Samuel Eliot, April 9, 1903. Eliot made the various services in Unity Hall the focus of his article, "A Visit to Japan," The Christian Register, December 10, 1903.

[61] TLE to Samuel A. Eliot, April 20, 1903; TLE to HRE, April 19, 1903; TLE, Notebooks, April 26, 1903.

Between services and conferences, Eliot had some opportunity for sight-seeing, although he scrupulously deferred touring until he had concluded his business. Temples, parks, schools and theaters fascinated him, but it was the delicate craftsmanship of the Japanese artisans that he most appreciated. He exulted over the "oceans of laquer and seas of wonderful silk fabrics and other wonderful handiwork of these patient wonderful Japanese."[62]

Homeward bound on the Coptic, eight days out of Yokohama, Eliot reviewed President Eliot's instructions and penned his final report. He had found answers of some sort to all of the questions, he advised, in spite of the "difficulties presented to a new coming observer both as to language and habitudes of a foreign race and mind." Heartened and encouraged by almost all that he had heard and seen, Eliot held only one reservation about the direction of Unitarian work among the "earnest and sincere people of Japan:"

> The tendency to watch is that of which I have spoken so freely, toward a social or even political work, as contrasted with the more personal religious cultivation. It is to be remembered that the race has had no experience of what we call church-life, and also that essential Christian principles arrive very forcibly upon Japanese minds in the direction of social or associated life.[63]

---

[62] TLE to HRE, April 23, 1903.

[63] TLE to Samuel Eliot, May 14, 1903.

In the months that followed his return to Portland on May 24, 1903, Eliot reflected a great deal about his mission to Japan. He preached about the trip to his congregation, lectured on it at Pacific University, spoke about it to Unitarian conferences and wrote articles about Japan for the Pacific Unitarian and the Christian Register.[64] Samuel Eliot commended him "for duties well done," for having answered inquiries, cleared up obscurities and "renewed our confidence in the Japanese enterprise."[65] Several Japanese Unitarians corresponded with him and kept him appraised of developments in church and society. By 1905, however, with the "complete absorption of everybody and everything" in the war with Russia, religion of all varieties suffered reversals in Japan. But the buoyant optimism of the Japanese Unitarians did not completely die. "After the war," one friend predicted, "we all religions will have much more to do than ever. And the great mission in the religious fields will fall upon us Unitarians, the right and rational representatives of Christian religion."[66] Eliot had taught his lessons well.

---

[64] In addition to the articles by Eliot cited above, see "Religious Thought in Japan," Christian Register, February 11, 1904, in which Eliot analyzed the various religions of Japan and concluded that the country was peculiarly predisposed to the Unitarian version of Christianity.

[65] Samuel Eliot to TLE, May 29, 1903.

Other voyages followed Eliot's journey to Japan. In 1904, as guest of his parishioner, Carl G. Calkins, he sailed to the Alaskan coast on the lighthouse tender *Manzanita*. In the spring of 1906, he returned once more to Europe, this time with Etta, Henrietta and Tom, the two children still at home. In England they were joined by Grace, who had spent the winter abroad, and Sam, a student at Oxford.[67] It was the kind of holiday that Eliot loved. When he returned, it was to the demanding task of founding a college.

---

[66] T. Hiroi to TLE, February 10 and July 21, 1905.

[67] Wilbur, *Eliot*, 93.

EPILOGUE

A NEW CAREER FOR A NEW CENTURY

> You are working same fashion as I did and with like aims. If anybody tempts you to found a university, pizen yourself, Tommy. Certainly your present work is large enough and good enough.
>
> William G. Eliot to Thomas Lamb Eliot,
> January 13, 1881

In 1905, forty years after entering professional life, and at an age at which most men fondly contemplate retirement, Thomas Lamb Eliot stood on the threshold of a new career. It was new only in the sense that he was to serve a new institution in a capacity that he had formerly not filled. In all other respects, Eliot's years with the board of Reed College (1904-1925) were the realization of interests and aspirations long evident in his life.

Only a critical history of Reed College can accurately assess the school's essential character and the contribution that Eliot made to it. An analysis of his ministry suggests that his respect for tradition, nonsectarian institutions, wealth and intellect were important factors in the shaping of the new institution.

Higher education, like so many of Eliot's concerns, flowed in the family bloodstream. However much William Greenleaf Eliot had glorified the parish ministry and grumbled about the odious duties of university administration, he genuinely loved Washington University and his part in building it. His statements about making his school the Harvard of the West were no thoughtless exaggerations, and flippant warnings to his son to avoid the perils of higher education ("Versity is the daughter of the horse-leech, and I advise you to keep from all such follies; . . . one such for the family is enough and to spare")[1] proved to be challenges rather than deterrents. With father William at Washington University and distant cousin Charles Eliot at Harvard, there was a strong predisposition for Thomas Eliot to follow the pattern.

Founding a secular college, moreover, was a logical consequence of Eliot's belief that nonsectarian institutions were requisites for civilized communites. The charter of every social institution that he had a hand in writing underscored its nonsectarian character. William Eliot made much of the fact that Washington University, like its prototype at Cambridge, was free from sectarian control, that it suffered little from sectarian influence and excluded direct theological instruction.[2] Reed College appeared to Thomas

---

[1] William G. Eliot to TLE, June 16, 1885, WGE.

[2] William G. Eliot, Washington University of St. Louis, Missouri (n.p., n.d.).

Eliot as a most attractive vehicle for advancing free inquiry in a region where every institution of higher learning within forty miles of Portland was denominational in name and purpose. Building nonsectarian institutions was ministry as both William and Thomas Eliot understood it; and it was, in their view, a phase in the advance of the Kingdom of God on earth. As he explained the purpose of Reed College to the citizens of Portland in 1910, nonsectarian higher education was the last conspicuous institutional need of the community.[3]

Reed College was also the culmination of a ministry of directed philanthropy. A key to the success of both William and Thomas Eliot was their ability to gain the confidence and backing of wealthy men. The names of Portland's business elite--Corbett, Failing, Ladd, Ainsworth, Reed and others--appeared again and again as donors to Eliot's projects and trustees of his favorite institutions because they respected his endorsement. Portland's wealthy men trusted Eliot because he shared their points of view regarding wealth, work, charity and social change. They were all among the "best men" of their age, conservatives who embraced the Protestant ethic, distrusted the masses, attributed failure to laziness or immorality and feared lest they aid the undeserving poor.[4] Unintentionally unflattering though it was, the characterization of Eliot by Professor Herbert C. Howe of the University of Oregon undoubtedly described the Unitarian minister as some people thought of him in 1910:

---

[3] Oregonian, January 1, 1910.

> Dr. Eliot is an aged Unitarian minister, who has been for forty years the alms dispenser of the Portland rich men. Just now he is practically the board of trustees of Reed Institute, a new university, which has been bequeathed $300,000 by one Portland magnate, and presented with a handsome campus by another.[5]

The bequest of Amanda Reed that designated Eliot as chief trustee for a nonsectarian institution was a fitting conclusion to a long ministry in behalf of the gospel of consecrated wealth.

It followed from tendencies in Eliot's ministry that he should conceive of Reed College as an elite institution. It was not to exclude the qualified poor, for the opportunity for work was available to any student who wished to earn his own way. The school was intended rather for the intellectual elite, the small company of talented and dedicated students endowed with the capacity to excel. President William Trufant Foster's summary of Reed College's first decade emphasized that the intellectual regimen was designed for only the most competent to survive. In this regard, Reed College reflected both Eliot's long identification with the elite of the community and Unitarianism's character as a denomination of the intelligentsia.[6]

---

[4] See, for example, Eliot's eulogy of Henry Winslow Corbett in 1903. He praised Corbett as a practitioner of the "art of giving" who had learned how to avoid the pitfalls of philanthropy, namely, the "follies and ingratitude of the unfortunate," the greed of the recipients, the "annoying importunity and half-hearted cooperation" of the mendicants, the "unwisdom and improvidence of the poor" and the carelessness of the public. TLE, "Resolution of the Board of The Home on the death of Henry Winslow Corbett," April 1, 1903.

[5] Herbert C. Howe to Lillian Howe, May 1, 1910. H. C. Howe Papers, University of Oregon Library. Professor Howe understated the amount of the Reed bequest.

---

[6] See William Trufant Foster, "First Report of the President," Reed College Record, XXXV (December 1919), 10-14. The institution was from the beginning "a college in which intellectual enthusiasm should be dominant." Specifically, it forbade intercollegiate athletics, fraternities and sororities, "rigidly limited" the number of students and required a thesis and oral examinations as prerequisites for graduation. For evidences of student dissatisfaction with the austerity of the program, see "A Manifesto of the Senior Class of 1921." There is much evidence to support the view that Unitarians consciously aspired to intellectual superiority. Horatio Stebbins wrote to Eliot, "The Unitarians hold views that are too far-reaching for the Christendom of our time." Stebbins to TLE, May 28, 1891. J. A. Baldridge of Port Angeles, Washington, asked in 1903, "Why is a thoughtful man led to accept the Unitarian belief? Because he is a thoughtful man." Pacific Unitarian, XI (June 1903), 303. The Pacific Unitarian felt constrained to warn against the "unconscious brag" of Unitarians who assume "that because Unitarians are humanitarians, all Unitarians are humanitarians." It is "neither good policy nor good taste to so baldly claim the earth," the editor advised. Pacific Unitarian, I (April 1893), 154.

Eliot carried over a number of old responsibilities into the new era. He remained president of The Home until 1916, of the Oregon State Conference of Charities and Correction until 1912 and of the Portland Art Association until 1917. He continued active on the boards of the Pacific Unitarian School for the Ministry until 1918, The Boys and Girls Aid Society until 1911, the Prisoners Aid Society until 1919 and the Portland Library Association until 1916. He divested himself of outside responsibilities only as the work of Reed College and the limitations of advancing age demanded.

Eliot also retained a lively interest in the affairs of his church and his denomination. As Unitarianism gradually moved further and further from the old standards of liberal Christianity, Eliot quietly objected to the changes. He clearly expressed his conservative views to J. Estlin Carpenter, an English friend, shortly after the close of the First World War in a letter that summarized the Unitarian dilemma:

> Too many of our churches in America are scandalously free of anything that by any stretch of the imagination could be called devotional . . . and are utterly devoid of historic consciousness or of any continuance of spiritual power. . . . The question in my mind is: are our only alternatives either corporate authority or atomistic freedom. Must we rather not find or make our way to some voluntary order--some synthesis of corporate life and individual liberty? A certain sort of freedom can be had without any church at all. Cannot the church be so

> defined that devoted loyalty to it would be the only real freedom? Is not loyalty the greater thing, freedom being good or not by reference to its loyalties? . . . . As for the revival of sacramental usage in our church worship and our personal life, I see the danger, especially the danger of being misunderstood; but these dangers do not seem to me as great as those incident to the abandonment of all sacramental usage and the absence of any signs at all of the sacredness of sacred things.[7]

As many-sided and complex as Unitarianism itself, Eliot was most significantly a transplanter of values and institutions. In him, as one of many, the ideal of the moral and godly commonwealth (conceived of God and born in New England) continued to be a working blueprint for American communities well into the twentieth century and as far West as the Pacific Ocean. Whatever the defects of the vision, the zeal and achievements of transmitters like Eliot were undeniable.

---

[7] TLE, draft to J. Estlin Carpenter, December 27, 1918.

A NOTE ON SOURCES

The nature of the research for this dissertation indicates that some comment on Unitarian sources might be more helpful and appropriate than a formal bibliography. The writer was heavily dependent upon manuscript materials from three collections: the Thomas Lamb Eliot Papers at Reed College, Portland, Oregon; the William G. Eliot Papers at Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri; and the archives of the First Unitarian Society, Portland, Oregon.

The Thomas Lamb Eliot Papers at Reed College are an extensive and varied source for the history of Unitarianism and social reform in the Northwest, as well as for the personal life of Eliot.

The writer came upon the papers quite accidentally in 1965. They were not listed in any of the major guides to manuscript collections; nor had the papers been arranged for use by researchers. The papers remained essentially as Eliot had left them, read after his death only by children and grandchildren. That Eliot intended them for use by historians seems clear because he preserved them, carefully dated by month and year the letters that were undated and requested that parts of several journals be destroyed.

The Thomas Lamb Eliot Papers are extensive and varied. There are approximately 10,000 letters to and from Eliot, most of the letters from him being preliminary drafts and a few of the letters to him being copies, the originals apparently dispersed as autographs. Several letters from President William Howard Taft, for example, are in the latter category, as are also letters from Susan B. Anthony and Dorothea Dix. The subject matter of the correspondence ranges widely. There is extensive correspondence with Unitarian ministers, officials of the American Unitarian Association, and members of Unitarian congregations in the Pacific Northwest. There are a large number of letters and drafts to and from Eliot's family in St. Louis, particularly his mother. The correspondence between Eliot and his wife is by far the largest segment of the collection, numbering well over 2,000. These letters permit a view of the Eliots in their most personal moments. The remainder of the correspondence ranges from highly intellectual discussions with professors at Cambridge and Berkeley to requests for jobs and miscellaneous assistance.

In addition to his correspondence, the papers at Reed include seventy-seven of Eliot's journals and notebooks and manuscripts of hundreds of sermons and miscellaneous documents. Eliot kept a daybook of appointments and occasional comments for each year after 1865 and for several years preceding it. In addition, he kept careful diaries of his journeys on the Mississippi, to California, to Europe, to Alaska and Japan. The journal of his year in Europe (1876-77) is particularly rich in both verbal and visual impressions, as he illustrated his experiences with delightful pencil sketches. The sermon manuscripts range from the most carefully polished complete texts in typescript to rough notes and outlines for extemporaneous addresses. The miscellaneous documents include extensive financial records, various printed materials, clippings and several books.

The writer acknowledges the assistance and kindness of Dr. Dorothy O. Johansen of the Department of History and Miss Luella Pollock, Librarian, of Reed College, who permitted access to the Eliot Papers. He also wishes to thank Mrs. Grace Eliot Scott, a daughter of Thomas Lamb Eliot, for a delightful interview and for the loan of a number of typescripts of her father's sermons.

The William G. Eliot Papers of Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri, were a valuable source of materials for the early life of Thomas Eliot and for the later relationship between Eliot and his father. Almost all of the several hundred letters from William G. Eliot to his son in Oregon, once a part of the Thomas Lamb Eliot Papers at Reed College, are now in St. Louis. The complete collection, prepared and graciously loaned to the writer on microfilm by Mr. Richard Lytle, archivist, and William Deiss, archival assistant, contains ten personal notebooks of the elder Eliot, much of his correspondence, and all of his published and unpublished writings.

The archives of the First Unitarian Society, Portland, Oregon, are a particularly useful source for the history of the Society itself. They include the record books of the Society as well as scrapbooks, clippings, programs and publications of the Society for more than 100 years of its existence. Much of this material has been used in two histories of the congregation: Earl Morse Wilbur, A History of the First Unitarian Church of Portland, Oregon 1867-1892 (Portland, 1893) and Evadne Hilands, A Time To Build: The First Unitarian Society of Portland, Oregon 1866-1966 (Portland, 1966), which incorporates Wilbur's earlier History for the period to 1893. The Reverend Clark D. Wells, Mrs. Evadne Hilands, and the staff of the First Unitarian Society were most helpful in making their archival resources available.

In addition to the three collections, there is one box of miscellaneous documents relating to Eliot at the Oregon Historical Society and there are scattered items in other collections, particularly the Kate Stevens Bates Papers and the John C. Ainsworth Papers in the University of Oregon Library, Eugene, Oregon. The nature and number of unpublished papers pertaining to Eliot at the (Unitarian) Starr King School for the Ministry, Berkeley, California and the Unitarian-Universalist Association offices in Boston, Massachusetts, are uncertain. Preliminary inquiries at both institutions did not encourage the writer to further investigation. The writer appreciates the many kindnesses of Richard Segasture, librarian of the Starr King School for the ministry, who made available Unitarian publications and photostatic copies of articles.

Several printed sources were especially useful. These include the two histories of the First Unitarian Society noted above and a biography by Earl Morse Wilbur, Thomas Lamb Eliot 1841-1936 (Portland, 1937). Wilbur was Eliot's associate and successor at the First Unitarian Society in Portland, and his son-in-law. His brief biography of Eliot is more of an appreciation than a critical analysis and he wrote it, as he states, for the family at their request. It is, nevertheless, well written and served the the writer well as a reference. Wilbur's citations of articles and sermons in the Oregonian, though not always accurate, were especially helpful. He has only partially documented the biography and made no use of Eliot's correspondence.

The two published histories of Unitarianism on the Pacific Coast are of limited and varying usefulness. The broader of the two in scope, Arnold Crompton, Unitarianism on the Pacific Coast: The First Sixty Years (Boston, 1957) is helpful in identifying Unitarian personalities but deficient by many standards of critical history. Crompton has drawn too many favorable conclusions from isolated and unrelated incidents, and he offers no documentation whatsoever. A more limited survey, Esther McDowell, Unitarians in the State of Washington 1870-1960 (Seattle, 1966), contains a series of historical sketches of the various Unitarian societies in Washington. It is devoid of interpretation and useful only for its anecdotal materials--principally from Washington newspapers--and for social trivia.

The Portland Oregonian and the Pacific Unitarian (San Francisco) were particularly helpful in setting Thomas Eliot's career in the wider context of community and church. Harvey Whitefield Scott, editor of the Oregonian for most of the period 1865-1910, was a friend of Eliot's and, as some of his critics charged, a virtual Unitarian. Although the editor and minister "crossed swords" on occasion (notably on issues of public education and prohibition), Scott gave Eliot a great deal of public exposure by printing texts of his sermons and supporting his projects editorially. The monthly

Pacific Unitarian (at the Oregon Historical Society), founded in November 1892 in San Francisco, featured news of Unitarian happenings in the Northwest and comments on issues of concern to the denomination and its societies. The official periodical of the American Unitarian Association, The Christian Register (Boston) carried occasional articles directly related to the Northwest.

There is an enormous bibliography of works on the history, development and theology of American Unitarianism. Unitarianism attracted a literate constituency, and its ministers felt almost compelled to publish at least a book or two as an embellishment to their careers. Nelson R. Burr, A Critical Bibliography of Religion in America (vol. 4 of James W. Smith and A. Leland Jameson, eds., Religion in American Life, [Princeton, 1961], 219-264, offers an introductory survey of Unitarian literature. The writer found the following general works to be especially useful: Earl Morse Wilbur, A History of Unitarianism (Cambridge, 1952) and Conrad Wright, The Beginnings of Unitarianism in America (Boston, 1955--Beacon Paperback, 1966) for the origins and early phases of Unitarianism in America; George Willis Cooke, Unitarianism in America: a History of its Origin and Development (Boston, 1902) for the relation of Unitarianism to social issues and reform movements; Joseph Henry Allen, Our Liberal Movement in Theology (Boston, 1882), Stow

Persons, Free Religion (New Haven, 1947--Beacon Paperback, 1963), William R. Hutchison, The Transcendentalist Ministers (New Haven, 1959--Beacon Paperback, 1965) and Conrad Wright, ed., Three Prophets of Religious Liberalism: Channing--Emerson--Parker (Boston, Beacon Paperback, 1961) for the interior theological development of Unitarianism; and Charles H. Lyttle, Freedom Moves West: A History of the Western Unitarian Conference (Boston, 1952), for the expansion of Unitarianism to the West and the process of liberalization that accompanied it. The works cited above, excepting Burr's Critical Bibliography, were generally sympathetic to both Unitarianism and the liberalizing trends within the denomination.